

**THE CAXTON EDITION OF  
THE COMPLETE WORKS OF  
WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE**

WITH ANNOTATIONS AND  
A GENERAL INTRODUCTION  
BY SIDNEY LEE

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VOLUME XVII

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MACBETH  
KING LEAR



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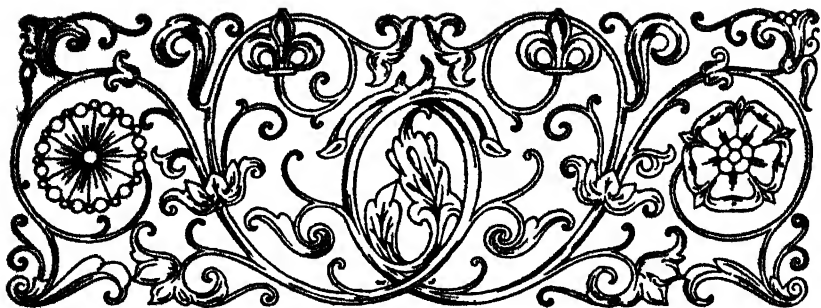
# MACBETH



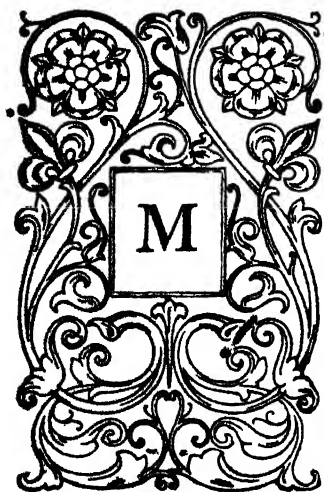
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## INTRODUCTION



MACBETH is one of the simplest of the Shakespearian tragedies in point of plot. Shakespeare has taken from the old chronicler Holinshed the story of the murder of King Duncan of Scotland by his chief captain Macbeth, only as no details are given of the manner of the murder, he has borrowed these from the earlier assassination of King Duff by his chief captain Donwald. A few sentences from Holinshed will show how little of the plot is due to the poet's invention.

It folowed as Macbeth and Banquho journied towards Fores, where the king then laie, they went sporting by the waie together without other companie, passing through the woods and fields, when suddenlie in the middest of a laund, there met them three women in strange and wild apparell, resembling creatures of elder world,



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whom when they attentivelie beheld, wondering much at the sight, the first of them spake and said: All haile Makbeth thane of Glamis (for he had lately entered in to that dignitie and office by the death of his father Sinell.) The second of them said; Haile Makbeth thane of Cawder. But the third said; All haile Makbeth that heereafter shalt be king of Scotland.

Then Banquho; What manner of women (saith he) are you that seeme so little favorable unto me, whereas to my fellow heere, besides high offices, ye assigne also the kingdome, appointing forth nothing for me at all? Yes (saith the first of them) we promise greater benefits unto thee than unto him, for he shall reign indeed but with an unlucky end: neither shall he leave any issue behind him to succeed in his place, where[as] contrarily thou indeed shalt not reign at all, but of thee those shall be born which shall govern the Scottish kingdom by long order of continual descent. . . . This was reputed at the first but some vain fantastical illusion by Mackbeth and Banquho; but afterwards the common opinion was that these women were either *the weird sisters*, that is (as ye would say) the goddesses of destiny, or else some nymphs or fairies, indued with knowledge of prophesy by their necromantical science, because everything came to pass as they had spoken. For shortly after, the thane of Cawdor being condemned at Fores of treason against the king committed, his lands, livings, and offices were given of the king's liberality to Makbeth. The same night after, at supper, Banquho jested with him and said; Now Makbeth, thou hast obtained those things which the two former sisters prophesied, there remaineth only for thee to purchase that which the third said should come to pass. Whereupon Makbeth revolving the thing in his mind began even then to devise how he might attain to the kingdom; but yet he thought with himself that he must tarry a time, which should advance him thereto (by the divine providence) as it had come to pass in his former preferment. But shortly after it chanced that King Duncan, having two sons by his wife, made the elder of them called Malcolm prince of Cumberland. Mackbeth sore troubled with this,

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for that he saw by this his hope sore hindered, began to take counsel how he might usurp the kingdom. . . . The words of the three weird sisters also greatly encouraged him hereunto, but *especially his wife* lay sore upon him to attempt the thing, as she that was very ambitious, burning in unquenchable desire to bear the name of queen. At length therefore, communicating his purposed intent with his trusty friends, *among whom Banquo was the chiefest*, upon confidence of their promised aid he slew the king at Envernes in the sixth year of his reign.

The story then goes on to narrate how Macbeth, after a period of good government, began to oppress the great nobles; "for the prick of conscience, as it chanceth ever in tyrants and such as attain to any estate by unrighteous means, caused him ever to fear lest he should be served of the same cup as he had ministered to his predecessor." Then follow in order the murder of Banquo and attempted murder of Fleance, the massacre of Macduff's household, his flight to England and negotiation with Malcolm, the usurper's confidence because "a certain witch whom he had in great trust had told him that he should never be slain with man born of any woman, nor vanquished till the wood of Bernane came to the castle of Dunsinane," and finally his defeat and death.

We have therefore in Holinshed the whole outline of the story of Macbeth as Shakespeare has represented it; the only important difference being that the dramatist does not make Banquo privy to the murder of Duncan. But of course Holinshed's story is not a tragedy; tragedy is a matter of character; and Holinshed's Macbeth is so slightly characterised that he excites little interest. He

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is not even a monster of wickedness ; for Holinshed gives us to understand that, by the old laws of the realm, Macbeth was justified in resenting Malcolm's nomination as heir to the throne, since the next in blood was entitled to succeed if the direct heir were under age ; and the country had suffered so much from Duncan's incapacity that it cried out for a strong arm to put down disorders. Shakespeare has made Macbeth at once more wicked and more interesting by striking away all justification for his action, whether in Duncan's weakness or the necessities of the time, and by transferring the scene of the murder to Macbeth's own castle, in which the king is a guest : —

He's here in double trust :

First, as I am his kinsman and his subject,  
Strong both against the deed ; then, as his host,  
Who should against his murderer shut the door,  
Not bear the knife myself. Besides, this Duncan  
Hath borne his faculties so meek, hath been  
So clear in his great office, that his virtues  
Will plead like angels trumpet-tongued against  
The deep damnation of his taking off.

So far, however, the interest aroused in Macbeth would not differ from that which we might take in any especially cold-blooded murderer. Our feeling would be one of mere horror ; and we should be right in saying that the subject was not a fit one for dramatic treatment. It is necessary that the hero of tragedy, whatever his fatal defects, should have enough greatness and enough humanity to kindle a real admiration for his qualities and

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a real interest in his fortunes. Shakespeare supplies the grounds for these necessary feelings in two ways. First of all, he makes Macbeth a great soldier with a record behind him of valiant deeds accomplished for king and country, and a reputation for staunch loyalty to the throne when other great vassals have fallen away to the national enemy. When he first appears he is in the full enjoyment of that public applause which always greets the successful general. He is the Admiral Dewey or Lord Roberts of his day. But in the second place, Shakespeare has made him interesting by giving him a large measure of the poetic temperament, with its keen and delicate insight into circumstances and actions, and a wide sympathy with all human conditions which entirely removes him from the ranks of the merely vulgar adventurer, and by quickening his fears after the murder is accomplished, leaves him exposed to the only nemesis of which, without a conscience, he is capable. His comment upon Duncan's virtues has already been quoted. His appreciation of the consequences of the crime which comes in the earlier part of the same speech is as just as his appreciation of its character. All through the play he startles us with the vividness with which he describes or sums up a situation, as though the protagonist had usurped the function of the chorus. Thus, as he goes with the dagger towards Duncan's chamber:—

Now o'er the one half-world  
Nature seems dead, and wicked dreams abuse  
The curtain'd sleep; witchcraft celebrates  
Pale Hecate's offerings; and wither'd murder,

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Alarum'd by his sentinel, the wolf,  
Whose howl's his watch, thus with his stealthy pace  
With Tarquin's ravishing strides, towards his design  
Moves like a ghost.

And more remarkably still, when he is pitying his own state, harassed with fears for what Banquo may attempt against him :—

Better be with the dead,  
Whom we, to gain our peace, have sent to peace,  
Than on the torture of the mind to lie  
In restless ecstasy. Duncan is in his grave ;  
After life's fitful fever he sleeps well ;  
Treason has done his worst : nor steel, nor poison,  
Malice domestic, foreign levy, nothing,  
Can touch him further.

Most remarkable of all, perhaps, is his desire, even the moment after he has murdered Duncan, to join the grooms in their benediction :—

But wherefore could not I pronounce " Amen " ?  
I had most need of blessing, and " Amen "   
Stuck in my throat.

To this poetical sensitiveness to all human experience Shakespeare has added a double portion of the Highlander's gift of second sight, which renders it more dramatically impressive. A man who can dwell upon the horrors of the murder he is about to commit until the instrument of his guilt takes shape before his eye and who yet does not hesitate to strike the blow ; and again a man who after deliberately plotting the death

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of his best friend and comrade is haunted by his presence and yet feels no shame and regret for the deed, is beyond doubt a person whose character it is interesting to study.

Shakespeare, as he so often does, has helped us to look at the tragic hero through the dramatist's own eyes, by providing a foil which emphasises by contrast the points of character upon which the tragedy hinges.

What Laertes does for Hamlet Banquo does for Macbeth. If the one by the healthiness of his practical nature exposes the "thought-sickness" that may attack the contemplative mind, the other indicates as clearly that as a guide of life conscience is worth more than the most responsive appreciation which remains merely æsthetic. Banquo is but a blunt soldier incapable of the magnificent reflections which pour from his fellow-captain; but he has a firm grasp upon moral principle which saves him from Macbeth's fall. There have been critics who have held Macbeth to be the mere sport of supernatural powers of evil, a victim of Destiny,<sup>1</sup> but Shakespeare has rendered this view impossible by his treatment of the character of Banquo. To him as to Macbeth the weird sisters make promises, and we

<sup>1</sup> Macbeth seems inclined early in the play to take this view of himself. In I. iii., he says "Time and the hour runs through the roughest day," after he has said,

If Chance will have me king, why, Chance may crown me  
Without my stir.

But in III. i. he will fight even Fate to have his own way : —  
To make them kings, the seed of Banquo kings !  
Rather than so, come, Fate, into the list,  
And champion me to the utterance !

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are allowed to see that these promises are not without their suggestiveness to him, as to the other. They trouble his dreams, but in the day he brushes their suggestions aside ; —

Merciful powers  
Restrain in me the cursed thoughts that Nature  
Gives way to in repose.

And when Macbeth, by way of sounding him on the eve of the assassination, promises him “honour” if events should turn out as the witches foretold, his reply is : —

So I lose none  
In seeking to augment it, but still keep  
My bosom franchised and allegiance clear  
I shall be counsell'd.

In Banquo, then, we have a man who is swayed and checked by a sense of honour and a sense of duty. But if all the considerations that suggest doubt and hesitation to Macbeth are examined, not one word will be found about the simple wickedness of the deed proposed. He discusses the probability of retaliation, the certainty of rousing sympathy for his victim and losing the esteem of the world, the chance of failure ; and as he passes from point to point we can see that he thoroughly realises the consequences of his lapse from virtue so that he greatly fears to run the risks. But the moral aspect of the crime as a crime does not appeal to him ; it does not occur to him to meet the first suggestion of murder with a flat “Get thee behind me,” or like Banquo

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with a prayer for aid; the problem becomes for him simply one of competing desires, desire for good name and desire for sovereignty, and at one point there is a doubt which will prove the stronger. (See I. vii. 31.)

The decision is precipitated, perhaps determined, by Lady Macbeth, who plays the part that Jezebel played in the murder of Naboth. She has the advantage over her husband that she is not imaginative and does not see many things at a time. She sees that Macbeth wants to be king, — an ambition with which she sympathises, — and further that he can easily compass the kingdom, if he will only nerve himself to seize his opportunity. His looking before and after, and his longing for men's good opinions, strike her as nothing but weaknesses. She compares him to a cat who wants to catch a fish, but hesitates from dislike of wetting his feet, — a not inapt comparison. It is noticeable as showing the influence of various motives upon Macbeth that what she has to say in direct depreciation of his restraining impulses does not move him, until she makes the propelling impulse as vivid as the others by developing its detail; then he is won. He lives in the mood of the moment, and that changes only when a stronger casts it out: —

*Lady Macbeth.* When in swinish sleep  
Their drenched natures lie as in a death,  
What cannot you and I perform upon  
The unguarded Duncan? what not put upon  
His spongy officers, who shall bear the guilt  
Of our great quell?



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*Macbeth.*           Bring forth men-children only ;  
For thy undaunted mettle should compose  
Nothing but males. Will it not be received,  
When we have mark'd with blood those sleepy two  
Of his own chamber, and used their very daggers,  
That they have done 't?

Critics and actors have taken very different views of the type of woman that we are to see in Lady Macbeth. Some have imagined her as tall and imperious, a woman of masculine force of character, even something of a virago. Others have represented her almost as a siren, winning over her husband by feminine arts. And these very different types answer to two different conceptions of the part which Lady Macbeth plays in the drama. According to the first, she is a sort of devil, driving her amiable husband to abominable crimes against his will ; according to the second she is a gentle lady who has put pressure upon her womanly instincts to help her husband to attain the ambition of his life, and who in the reaction dies slowly of remorse. A reference to the play will show one or two things which must be borne in mind in estimating Lady Macbeth's character. First, there is no hint that the wife is less wicked than the husband. The "remorse" of which some critics speak is simply not in the play. All that we have in this kind is an acknowledgment that the throne has not brought happiness.

Nought 's had, all 's spent,  
Where our desire is got without content :  
'T is safer to be that which we destroy  
Than by destruction dwell in doubtful joy.

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But it is likely that even this reflection is inspired, not by her own unhappiness, but by Macbeth's. It comes in the interval of waiting, when she has sent for her husband to upbraid him with his moodiness (III. ii. 4). In the second place there is no hint that she makes any effort to dissuade Macbeth from the murder of Banquo, or from the policy that issues in the massacre of the Macduffs, although the two conversations she has with Macbeth make it certain that he intends further bloodshed. She is content that Macbeth should do whatever he pleases, if only he can win the happiness she wishes for him. The sleep-walking scene shows the reaction of nature after the intolerable strain of the initial murder and all that has succeeded it; it is also a fine dramatic refutation of Lady Macbeth's practical and materialistic philosophy of life, that "what's done, is done," that a little water will suffice to cleanse from murder (II. ii. 67) and that sleep is all that is required to kill the remembrance of it (III. iv. 141); but the scene provides no evidence of remorse for the crimes. In that scene the handwashing itself, the admonitions to Macbeth, and the reflections about Banquo, are all in her old practical vein. The conclusion would seem to be that Lady Macbeth was one of those women who live in and for their husbands; that she, like him, was not sensitive to considerations of right and wrong; and that her practical disposition and strong will enabled her at a crisis to overcome his fears and scruples by showing the straight road to the accomplishment of his desires. Macbeth's imaginative nature, left to itself, might never have allowed him to

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take the first step out of the beaten pathway of honourable life (I. vii. 31-35), so that Lady Macbeth was necessary to the tragedy; and by playing a part opposed to all the traditions of womanhood she increases tenfold its horror.

The audience of the play at its first performance in 1606, if they looked for any "lesson" from it, would hardly have missed its condemnation of regicide, in view of the Gowrie conspiracy which was fresh in men's minds. In these days, at least in civilised countries, thrones are not usurped by murder; and we are more impressed by the broader human motive. If the tragedy of Macbeth is to excite in us the proper sympathy of comprehension, we must be able to see in ourselves the germs of those qualities which wrought his ruin; and as long as the mind is capable of ambition; as long as imagination can play about the objects of desire until they become necessary to our very being; as long as we have the power of taking our wishes as the guide of our conduct until we lose recognition of any other standard, and as long as power divorced from a sense of duty is certain of abuse, so long the drama of Macbeth will not fail in human interest. But the extraordinary attractiveness of the play, although it requires this ground of common human interest, is not explained by it. Nor again is it fully explained by the interest which the dramatist has aroused in us for Macbeth, because remarkable as he has made him in powers of imagination, and pitiful in defect of conscience, we can never lose sight of the fact that his ambition is, after all, of a vulgar type, and his crime one

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of the meanest acts of dastardly ingratitude. The main merit of the drama lies not in the plot, and not altogether in the characters, but largely in the superb arrangement of the scenes and in the romantic atmosphere with which the poet has suffused the whole. It is at once a triumph of stage-craft and a triumph of poetical genius.

The plot is developed in a series of short scenes, each mounting in intensity, first, up to the murder of Duncan, when the knocking at the gate comes as a much-needed relief; then up to the appearance of the murdered Banquo at the feast; then again up to the storming of Macduff's castle, and in the last act up to the final battle and death of the tyrant. In no play of Shakespeare are there so many scenes of which the interest is so thrilling, while the sleep-walking scene in the fifth act is perhaps the finest piece of invention in dramatic literature. The only scene that can be said to drag is the interview between Macduff and Malcolm, in England, which, in itself too long, is followed by an otiose passage about touching for the king's evil. The latter is sufficiently explained by the compliment implied to King James; the explanation of the former is probably that Shakespeare is here not inventing but transcribing from Holinshed. Even the dialogue, however, has possibilities for capable actors; and with the entrance of Ross it rises of itself to the high dramatic level of the rest of the play. It may be noted again how full-charged all the writing is with dramatic meaning. For example, no Shakespearian play contains such striking instances of what the Greeks called

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“irony,” — sentences which take on additional and sinister meaning in the ears of the spectators. The words which Duncan has just spoken as Macbeth enters are a famous example : —

*There's no art  
To find the mind's construction in the face :*  
He was a gentleman on whom I built  
An absolute trust.

*Enter MACBETH.*

O worthiest cousin !  
*The sin of my ingratitude even now  
Was heavy on me . thou art so far before.  
That swiftest wing of recompense is slow  
To overtake thee.*

Another is Duncan's speech as he approaches Macbeth's castle : —

This castle hath a pleasant seat ; the air  
Nimbly and sweetly recommends itself  
Unto our gentle senses.

A third is the last message he sends to Lady Macbeth, “by the name of most kind hostess,” before he enters the chamber which is to be his grave. And then again, how subtly do all the speeches reveal character — and even less than speeches. When Macbeth starts at the witch's promise of the kingship, we know that in thought he is already a usurper, perhaps a murderer : —

*Third Witch.* All hail, Macbeth, that shalt be king hereafter  
*Banquo.* Good sir, why do you start ?

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Perhaps the most brilliant instance in the play of character displayed by speech is the contrast between Macbeth and Lady Macbeth, when after the murder they each speak of the blood on their hands and the knocking at the castle gate : —

*Macbeth.*

Whence is that knocking?

How is 't with me, when every noise appals me?  
What hands are here? ha! they pluck out mine eyes!  
Will all great Neptune's ocean wash this blood  
Clean from my hand? No; this my hand will rather  
The multitudinous seas incarnadine,  
Making the green one red.

*Re-enter LADY MACBETH.*

*Lady M.* My hands are of your colour; but I shame  
To wear a heart so white. [*Knocking within.*] I hear a  
knocking  
At the south entry: retire we to our chamber:  
A little water clears us of this deed:  
How easy is it then!

Another piece of double characterisation, deservedly famous, is the speech in which the young Malcolm "yet unknown to woman" attempts to console Macduff for the loss of wife and children, and is answered by Macduff's four words to Ross:

*Malcolm.*

Be comforted:

Let's make us medicines of our great revenge,  
To cure this deadly grief.

*Macduff.* He has no children.

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*But of course, the triumph of self-characterisation by speech lies in the development of the character of Macbeth himself, the central stock of inhuman selfishness being gradually stript bare of those leaves of sentiment which at first disguised him from his fellows and even, perhaps, from his wife. The process is rendered more lurid by the fact, that although Macbeth studies himself with curious interest, he never sees the actual spiritual fact but only "the pity of it," as though he were the creature of malign circumstances which against his will had made him first a regicide and then a blood-thirsty tyrant.*

Hear him immediately after he has murdered his aged sovereign : —

Methought I heard a voice cry "Sleep no more !  
Macbeth does murder sleep," the innocent sleep,  
Sleep that knits up the ravell'd sleeve of care,  
The death of each day's life, sore labour's bath,  
Balm of hurt minds, great nature's second course,  
Chief nourisher in life's feast, —  
Still it cried "Sleep no more !" to all the house :  
*"Glamis hath murdered sleep, and therefore Cawdor  
Shall sleep no more ; Macbeth shall sleep no more."*

Hear him when he is about to murder Banquo : —

Upon my head they placed a fruitless crown  
And put a barren sceptre in my gripe,  
Thence to be wrench'd with an unlineal hand,  
No son of mine succeeding. If 't be so,  
For Banquo's issue have I filed my mind ;  
For them the gracious Duncan have I murder'd ;

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*Put rancours in the vessel of my peace  
Only for them, and mine eternal jewel  
Given to the common enemy of man,  
To make them kings, the seed of Banquo kings !  
Rather than so, come, fate, into the list,  
And champion me to the utterance !*

Hear him when he is plotting to murder Macduff :

For mine own good  
All causes shall give way : I am in blood  
Stepp'd in so far that, should I wade no more,  
Returning were as tedious as go o'er.

And so it is still, when the end approaches : —

I have lived long enough : my way of life  
Is fall'n into the sear, the yellow leaf,  
And that which should accompany old age,  
As honour, love, obedience, troops of friends,  
I must not look to have ; but, in their stead  
Curses, not loud but deep, mouth-honour, breath,  
Which the poor heart would fain deny, and dare not.

Lastly, we may take note of the atmosphere of horror which pervades certain of the scenes in which Macbeth takes part ; a horror which Shakespeare seems able to conjure up by a word. The witch scenes have had great praise, and they deserve it. From the “witches” and the “weird sisters” in Holinshed, Shakespeare has created ideal suggesters of wickedness, drawing their visible attributes from the one and their prophetic vision from the other ; their relations with Macbeth being endowed with all the dignity of that solemn and famil-



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iar scene between the witch of Endor and the unhappy King of Israel.<sup>1</sup> But it is to be noticed that Macbeth's presence is always necessary before the horror of the scene can be felt. He is, as it were, the interpreter of their spirit, the conductor of their wicked influence. It is with his opening words in Act I. scene iii., "So foul and fair a day I have not seen," that the miasma seems to rise; so is it again in Act IV. scene i.; we are undisturbed by the chantings round the cauldron, till Macbeth utters his conjuration:—

I conjure you, by that which you profess,  
Howe'er you come to know it, answer me:  
Though you untie the winds and let them fight  
Against the churches; though the yesty waves  
Confound and swallow navigation up;  
Though bladed corn be lodged and trees blown down;  
Though castles topple on their warders' heads;  
Though palaces and pyramids do slope  
Their heads to their foundations; though the treasure  
Of nature's germins tumble all together,  
Even till destruction sicken; answer me  
To what I ask you.

And this atmosphere of horror is not confined to the witch scenes; the necessary murderous gloom for the despatch of Banquo seems to be begotten as though by an evil incantation, as Macbeth looks out into the night:

<sup>1</sup> I agree with those critics, notably Professor Hefford, who regard the scenes with Hecate (III. v., IV. i. 39-43, 125-132) as interpolated for the sake of introducing the songs.

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- Ere the bat hath flown  
• His cloister'd flight; ere to black Hecate's summons  
The shard-borne beetle with his drowsy hum  
• Hath rung night's yawning peal, there shall be done  
A deed of dreadful note.

. . . . .  
*Light thickens, and the crow  
Makes wing to the rooky wood:  
Good things of day begin to droop and drowse,  
Whiles night's black agents to their preys do rouse.*

Other scenes which might call for particular praise in respect of their atmosphere are the opening of the second of the second act, where the succession of short, quick sentences, gives the impression of tense expectancy and excitement; the opening of the sixth scene of the first act which has all the beauty of a "quiet-coloured end of evening" in summer; and the short scene, the "west yet glimmering with some streaks of day," in which we hear the hoofs of horses, then a call for a light, and a torch enters, to be at once struck out. But where all is so finely wrought, it is a work of supererogation to praise details.

HENRY CHARLES BEECHING.



# MACBETH

## DRAMATIS PERSONÆ<sup>1</sup>

DUNCAN, king of Scotland.

MALCOLM,  
DONALBAIN, } his sons.

MACBETH,  
BANQUO, } generals of the King's army.

MACDUFF,  
LENNOX,  
ROSS,  
MENTEITH,  
ANGUS,  
CAITHNESS, } noblemen of Scotland.

FLEANCE, son to Banquo.

SIWARD, earl of Northumberland, general of the English forces.

Young SIWARD, his son.

SEYTON, an officer attending on Macbeth.

Boy, son to Macduff.

An English Doctor.

A Scotch Doctor.

A Sergeant.

A Porter.

An Old Man.

Lady MACBETH.

Lady MACDUFF.

Gentlewoman attending on Lady Macbeth.

HECATE.

Three Witches.

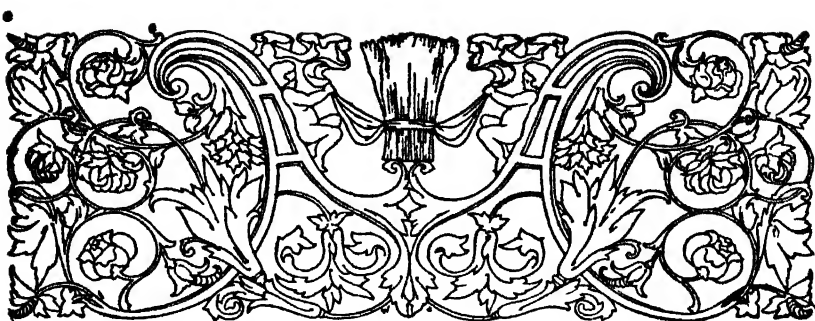
Apparitions.

Lords, Gentlemen, Officers, Soldiers, Murderers, Attendants, and  
Messengers.

SCENE: *Scotland; England*

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<sup>1</sup> This play was printed for the first time in the First Folio of 1623, where it was divided into Acts and Scenes. A list of the "dramatis personæ" was first supplied by Rowe, together with an indication of the "Scene."



## ACT FIRST — SCENE I

### A DESERT PLACE

*Thunder and lightning. Enter three Witches*

FIRST WITCH



HEN SHALL WE THREE  
meet again

In thunder, lightning, or in rain?

SEC. WITCH. When the hurly-  
burly's done,

When the battle's lost and won.

THIRD WITCH. That will be  
ere the set of sun.

FIRST WITCH. Where the  
place?

SEC. WITCH. Upon the heath.

THIRD WITCH. There to meet  
with Macbeth.

FIRST WITCH. I come, Graymalkin.

ALL. Paddock calls: — anon!

1-2 *When shall . . . in rain?*] The punctuation is Hanmer's. The Folios duplicate the mark of interrogation, putting it at the end of each line.

# MACBETH

ACT I

Fair is foul, and foul is fair.  
Hover through the fog and filthy air.

[*Exeunt.*]

## SCENE II—A CAMP NEAR FORRES

*Alarum within. Enter DUNCAN, MALCOLM, DONALBAIN, LENNOX, with Attendants, meeting a bleeding Sergeant*

DUN. What bloody man is that? He can report,  
As seemeth by his plight, of the revolt  
The newest state.

MAL. This is the sergeant

3 *hurlyburly*] turmoil or din (of battle); an onomatopœic word.

8-9 *Graymalkin . . . Paddock*] Graymalkin is a popular expression for gray cat, "malkin" being a colloquial diminutive of Mary; "paddock" is a common word for "toad." The spirits who were attendant on witches were usually reckoned to assume forms of cats or toads.

10 *Fair is foul . . . fair*] The witches thus confess to a completely inverted moral sense.

SCENE II (stage direction) *a bleeding Sergeant*] The Folios read *a bleeding Capitaine*, and through the scene head his speeches with the word *Cap.*, an abbreviation of "captain." In line 3 the character is called "the sergeant," and the Cambridge editors have altered his title throughout to that rank. According to Holinshed, *a sergeant at arms* was sent by King Duncan to arrest the rebels noticed in this scene, and was slain by them. The dramatist adapted the episode without adhering to the chronicler's details.

1 *What bloody man is that?*] The language in this scene is so stilted and crude as to make it unlikely that Shakespeare was author of it. It is probably an interpolation by some pedestrian pen.

3 *The newest state*] The latest condition of affairs.

*the sergeant*] This is the "bleeding captain" of the opening Folio stage direction. See note, *supra*.

Who like a good and hardy soldier fought  
 'Gainst my captivity. Hail, brave friend!  
 Say to the king the knowledge of the broil  
 As thou didst leave it.

SER.

Doubtful it stood;

As two spent swimmers, that do cling together  
 And choke their art. The merciless Macdonwald —  
 Worthy to be a rebel, for to that 10  
 The multiplying villanies of nature  
 Do swarm upon him — from the western isles  
 Of kerns and gallowglasses is supplied;  
 And fortune, on his damned quarrel smiling,  
 Show'd like a rebel's whore: but all's too weak:  
 'For brave Macbeth — well he deserves that name —  
 Disdaining fortune, with his brandish'd steel,  
 Which smoked with bloody execution,  
 Like valour's minion carved out his passage  
 Till he faced the slave; 20

6 *the broil*] the battle. Cf. *Othello*, I, iii, 87: "feats of *broil* and battle."

9 *choke their art*] render useless their skill as swimmers. "Choke" often meant "suffocate by drowning."

10 *to that*] to that end.

13 *Of kerns and gallowglasses*] With Irish mercenaries; "kerns" are light-armed, and "gallowglasses" heavy-armed Irish soldiers. Cf. line 30, *infra*; "skipping kerns."

14 *damned quarrel*] Hanmer's correction of the Folio reading *damned quarry*, i. e., doomed or destined prey. Holinshed uses in his description of the incident the words "rebellious quarrel." "Quarrel" has in the context the common significance of cause or occasion of quarrel.

15 *Show'd*] Beguiled.

19 *minion*] beloved favourite.



Which ne'er shook hands, nor bade farewell to him,  
Till he unseam'd him from the nave to the chaps,  
And fix'd his head upon our battlements.

DUN. O valiant cousin! worthy gentleman!

SER. As whence the sun 'gins his reflection  
Shipwrecking storms and direful thunders break,  
So from that spring whence comfort seem'd to come  
Discomfort swells. Mark, king of Scotland, mark:  
No sooner justice had, with valour arm'd,  
Compell'd these skipping kerns to trust their heels, 30  
But the Norweyan lord, surveying vantage,  
With furbish'd arms and new supplies of men,  
Began a fresh assault.

DUN. Dismay'd not this  
Our captains, Macbeth and Banquo?

SER. Yes;  
As sparrows eagles, or the hare the lion.

21 *Which*] Who; the antecedent is Macbeth.

*ne'er shook hands*] never took leave.

22 *unseam'd him . . . chaps*] ripped him up from the navel to the jaws  
"Nave" for "navel" is not found elsewhere.

24 *cousin*] Both Macbeth and Duncan were grandsons of King Malcolm  
and thereby cousins of the first degree.

25-28 *As whence . . . swells*] The general sense is: "in the same way that  
from the region of the sky where the dawn first appears come forth  
storms and tempests of thunder, so from that mild season of spring  
which promises benignity issues a flood of desolation" In other  
words Macbeth's victory which seems to ensure peace is straightway  
followed by the alarm of the Norwegian invasion

26 *thunders break*] Thus Pope. The First Folio reads *thunders* alone.  
The other Folios read *thunders breaking*

31 *surveying vantage*] detecting his opportunity.

If I say sooth, I must report they were  
 As cannons overcharged with double cracks;  
 So they  
 Doubly redoubled strokes upon the foe:  
 Except they meant to bathe in reeking wounds, 40  
 Or memorize another Golgotha,  
 I cannot tell —  
 But I am faint; my gashes cry for help.

DUN. So well thy words become thee as thy wounds;  
 They smack of honour both. Go get him surgeons.

[Exit Sergeant, attended.]

Who comes here?

*Enter Ross*

MAL. The worthy thane of Ross.

LEN. What a haste looks through his eyes! So  
 should he look  
 That seems to speak things strange.

- 37 *overcharged . . . cracks*] loaded up with double charges  
 38 *So they*] Thus Steevens The Folios make these words begin the next  
 line, to the injury of the metre. The substitution there of *So they* for  
*doubly* is the best emendation proposed  
 41 *memorize another Golgotha*] make a second Golgotha as memorable as  
 the first.  
 46 (stage direction) *Enter Ross*] Thus Capell The Folios read *Enter*  
*Rosse and Angus*. But nothing is known of "Angus" in this scene.  
*thane*] an Anglo-Saxon word meaning literally "king's servant," of a  
 rank below an earl. Shakespeare uses the word loosely as equivalent  
 to earl.  
 48 *seems to speak*] threatens or promises to speak Cf I, v, 26-27, *infra* :  
 "metaphysical aid doth seem To have thee crown'd."

# MACBETH

## ACT I

ROSS. God save the king!

DUN. Whence camest thou, worthy thane?

ROSS. From Fife, great king;

Where the Norweyan banners flout the sky 50,  
And fan our people cold.

Norway himself, with terrible numbers,

Assisted by that most disloyal traitor

The thane of Cawdor, began a dismal conflict;

Till that Bellona's bridegroom, lapp'd in proof,

Confronted him with self-comparisons,

Point against point rebellious, arm 'gainst arm,

Curbing his lavish spirit: and, to conclude,

The victory fell on us.

DUN. Great happiness!

ROSS. That now 60

Sweno, the Norways' king, craves composition;

50-51 *the Norweyan . . . cold*] the Norwegians being defeated, their banners flap idly in the wind, and instead of threatening defiance, serve to cool the martial heat of the conquerors.

52 *Norway*] The King of Norway

55 *Bellona's bridegroom*] Macbeth is likened to the husband of the Roman goddess of war. The phrase reads like a hazy reminiscence of Virgil's *Æneid*, VII, 319: "Et Bellona manet te pronuba." Cf. Massinger's *Bondman*, I, i, 13-14. "I'd court *Bellona* in her horrid trim As if she were a mistress."

*lapp'd in proof*] cased in seasoned armour.

56 *Confronted . . . self-comparisons*] Met the King of Norway on a complete equality.

57 *Point . . . arm*] The punctuation is Theobald's. The Folios put a comma after the second *point* and omit it after *rebellious*. "Rebellious" in any case implies violent resistance. •

58 *lavish spirit*] prodigal courage.

61 *composition*] terms of peace.

Nor would we deign him burial of his men  
 Till he disbursed, at Saint Colme's inch,  
 Ten thousand dollars to our general use.

DUN. No more that thane of Cawdor shall deceive  
 Our bosom interest: go pronounce his present death,  
 And with his former title greet Macbeth.

ROSS. I'll see it done.

DUN. What he hath lost, noble Macbeth hath won. 69

[*Exeunt.*]

### SCENE III — A HEATH

*Thunder. Enter the three Witches*

FIRST WITCH. Where hast thou been, sister?

SEC. WITCH. Killing swine.

THIRD WITCH. Sister, where thou?

FIRST WITCH. A sailor's wife had chestnuts in her  
 lap,

And mounch'd, and mounch'd, and mounch'd. "Give  
 me," quoth I:

"Aroint thee, witch!" the rump-fed ronyon cries.

63 *Saint Colme's inch*] A small island now called Inchcolm, lying in  
 the Firth of Edinburgh off the coast of Fife. Saint Colme is Saint Co-  
 lumba, who at one time lived on the island

64 *dollars*] an Anglicised version of the German "thalers" The use of  
 the word is boldly anachronistic

66 *Our bosom interest*] Our intimate confidence.

5 *mounch'd*] a dialect form of "munched."

6 *Aroint thee*] Begone! The expression is still met with in provincial  
 dialects. Cf *Lear*, II, iv, 122. "*aroint thee, witch! aroint thee!*"  
*rump-fed*] pampered (*i e*, fed on the best meats).

*ronyon*] a scabby or scrofulous person; from the French "rogneux."

Her husband 's to Aleppo gone, master o' the Tiger:  
But in a sieve I 'll thither sail,  
And, like a rat without a tail,  
I 'll do, I 'll do, and I 'll do.

10

SEC. WITCH. I 'll give thee a wind.

FIRST WITCH. Thou 'rt kind.

THIRD WITCH. And I another.

FIRST WITCH. I myself have all the other;  
And the very ports they blow,  
All the quarters that they know  
I' the shipman's card.  
I will drain him dry as hay:  
Sleep shall neither night nor day  
Hang upon his pent-house lid;  
He shall live a man forbid:  
Weary se'nnights nine times nine

20

7 *Her husband . . . Tiger*] Apparently an allusion to the famous voyage in 1583 of Ralph Fitch, a London merchant, in a ship called "The Tiger," who travelled from Tripolis to Aleppo by caravan. Cf. Hakluyt's *Voyages*, vol II, pp 247 seq.

8-9 *But in a sieve . . . without a tail*] Witches were commonly believed to be able to travel by sea in sieves, eggshells, cockleshells, and the like, and also to assume the shape of any animal *minus* its tail.

10 *I 'll do*] I 'll gnaw like a rat through the ship's hull.

15 *the very ports they blow*] the exact places they blow either on or from.

17 *the shipman's card*] the circular card indicating the thirty-two points of the compass.

18 *drain him dry as hay*] draw out all the moisture.

20 *his pent-house lid*] his eyelid. The "pent-house" was the hanging or projecting roof over the ground-floor of a house.

21 *forbid*] under a curse or ban.

22 *se'nnights*] weeks.

Shall he dwindle, peak, and pine:  
 Though his bark cannot be lost,  
 Yet it shall be tempest-tost.  
 Look what I have.

SEC. WITCH. Show me, show me.

FIRST WITCH. Here I have a pilot's thumb,  
 Wreck'd as homeward he did come. [*Drum within.*

THIRD WITCH. A drum, a drum! 30  
 Macbeth doth come.

ALL. The weird sisters, hand in hand,  
 Posters of the sea and land,  
 Thus do go about, about:  
 Thrice to thine, and thrice to mine,  
 And thrice again, to make up nine.  
 Peace! the charm's wound up.

*Enter MACBETH and BANQUO*

MACB. So foul and fair a day I have not seen.

BAN. How far is 't call'd to Forres? What are these 40  
 So wither'd, and so wild in their attire,  
 That look not like the inhabitants o' the earth,  
 And yet are on't? Live you? or are you aught

32 *weird*] fateful, Theobald's correction of the Folio reading *weyward*.  
 Cf. III, i, 2, *infra*.

33 *Posters*] Rapid travellers

35-36 *Thrice . . . nine*] The witches dance round in a ring nine times,  
 three rounds for each witch. Multiples of odd numbers were always  
 prominent in witches' incantations. Cf. IV, i, 2, *infra*

38 *So foul and fair a day*] Storm and sunshine are succeeding each other  
 quickly. Cf. the witches' cry, I, i, 10, *supra*: "Fair is foul, and foul  
 is fair." The words ironically suggest the crisis of Macbeth's fate.

# MACBETH

## ACT I

That man may question? You seem to understand me,  
By each at once her choppy finger laying  
Upon her skinny lips: you should be women,  
And yet your beards forbid me to interpret  
That you are so.

MACB. Speak, if you can: what are you?

FIRST WITCH. All hail, Macbeth! hail to thee, thane  
of Glamis!

SEC. WITCH. All hail, Macbeth! hail to thee, thane  
of Cawdor!

THIRD WITCH. All hail, Macbeth, that shalt be king  
hereafter! 50

BAN. Good sir, why do you start, and seem to fear  
Things that do sound so fair? I' the name of truth,  
Are ye fantastical, or that indeed  
Which outwardly ye show? My noble partner  
You greet with present grace and great prediction  
Of noble having and of royal hope,  
That he seems rapt withal: to me you speak not:  
If you can look into the seeds of time,  
And say which grain will grow and which will not,  
Speak then to me, who neither beg nor fear 60  
Your favours nor your hate.

FIRST WITCH. Hail!

SEC. WITCH. Hail!

THIRD WITCH. Hail!

43 *question*] converse with.

46 *your beards*] witches were invariably so distinguished.

53 *fantastical*] creatures of fancy or imagination. Cf. line 139, *infra*.

56 *having*] possessions or fortune.

FIRST WITCH. Lesser than Macbeth, and greater.

• SEC. WITCH. Not so happy, yet much happier.

THIRD WITCH. Thou shalt get kings, though thou be

• none :

So all hail, Macbeth and Banquo !

FIRST WITCH. Banquo and Macbeth, all hail !

MACB. Stay, you imperfect speakers, tell me more : 70

By Sinel's death I know I am thane of Glamis ;

But how of Cawdor ? the thane of Cawdor lives,

A prosperous gentleman ; and to be king

Stands not within the prospect of belief,

No more than to be Cawdor. Say from whence

You owe this strange intelligence ? or why

• Upon this blasted heath you stop our way

With such prophetic greeting ? Speak, I charge you.

[*Witches vanish.*]

BAN. The earth hath bubbles as the water has,

And these are of them : whither are they vanish'd ? 80

MACB. Into the air, and what seem'd corporal melted  
As breath into the wind. Would they had stay'd !

BAN. Were such things here as we do speak about ?

Or have we eaten on the insane root

That takes the reason prisoner ?

71 *Sinel's death*] Holinshed describes Macbeth as the son of Sinel, thane of Glamis. But the early Scottish chronicles give the name as "Finel," or "Finleg" (or Finlay).

72 *But how . . . Cawdor lives*] Macbeth, in Scene ii, 55 *seq.*, *supra*, is said to have just conquered the rebellious thane of Cawdor in fight. The discrepancy supports the inference that the former scene is largely an interpolation. •

81 *corporal*] Shakespeare invariably uses this form for "corporeal."

84 *the insane root*] the root that produces insanity, an effect commonly



# MACBETH

## ACT I

MACB. Your children shall be kings.

BAN. You shall be king.

MACB. And thane of Cawdor too: went it not so?

BAN. To the selfsame tune and words. Who's here?

*Enter Ross and ANGUS*

ROSS. The king hath happily received, Macbeth,  
The news of thy success: and when he reads 90  
Thy personal venture in the rebels' fight,  
His wonders and his praises do contend  
Which should be thine or his: silenced with that,  
In viewing o'er the rest o' the selfsame day,  
He finds thee in the stout Norweyan ranks,  
Nothing afeard of what thyself didst make,  
Strange images of death. As thick as hail  
Came post with post, and every one did bear

ascribed to eating hemlock or henbane. Plutarch, in his *Life of Antony*, notes how Roman soldiers in the Parthian war were driven "to taste of rootes that . . . made them out of their wits."

92-93 *His wonders . . . silenced with that*] The king's sense of astonishment at Macbeth's achievements hampers a full expression of his sense of approbation. He cannot decide whether to bestow on himself or on Macbeth the greater share of congratulation. He is therefore driven to be silent on the subject. Cf. I, iv, 16-21, *infra*.

96 *Nothing afeard . . . make*] Nothing afraid of the ruin you were inflicting on the enemy. "Afeard" was not a vulgarity in Shakespeare's day.

97-98 *As thick . . . with post*] Rowe's emendation of the Folio reading *As thick as tale Can post with post*, which has been interpreted to mean that messengers travelled with news as quickly as they could be counted. But "thick as hail" is a very common phrase for rapid action or movement.

Thy praises in his kingdom's great defence,  
 And pour'd them down before him.

ANG.

We are sent 100

To give thee, from our royal master, thanks;  
 Only to herald thee into his sight,  
 Not pay thee.

ROSS. And for an earnest of a greater honour,  
 He bade me, from him, call thee thane of Cawdor:  
 In which addition, hail, most worthy thane!  
 For it is thine.

BAN. What, can the devil speak true?

MACB. The thane of Cawdor lives: why do you dress  
 me

In borrow'd robes?

ANG. Who was the thane lives yet,

But under heavy judgement bears that life 110  
 Which he deserves to lose. Whether he was combined  
 With those of Norway, or did line the rebel  
 With hidden help and vantage, or that with both  
 He labour'd in his country's wreck, I know not;  
 But treasons capital, confess'd and proved,  
 Have overthrown him.

MACB. [*Aside*] Glamis, and thane of Cawdor:  
 The greatest is behind. — Thanks for your pains. —  
 Do you not hope your children shall be kings,  
 When those that gave the thane of Cawdor to me  
 Promised no less to them?

BAN.

That, trusted home, 120

106 *addition*] title, fresh mark of distinction.

112 *line*] strengthen, reinforce.

120 *trusted home*] thoroughly relied on, pushed to the utmost.

# MACBETH

## ACT I

Might yet enkindle you unto the crown,  
 Besides the thane of Cawdor. But 't is strange:  
 And oftentimes, to win us to our harm,  
 The instruments of darkness tell us truths,  
 Win us with honest trifles, to betray 's  
 In deepest consequence.  
 Cousins, a word, I pray you.

MACB. [Aside] Two truths are told,  
 As happy prologues to the swelling act  
 Of the imperial theme. — I thank you, gentlemen. —  
 [Aside] This supernatural soliciting 130  
 Cannot be ill; cannot be good: if ill,  
 Why hath it given me earnest of success,  
 Commencing in a truth? I am thane of Cawdor:  
 If good, why do I yield to that suggestion  
 Whose horrid image doth unfix my hair  
 And make my seated heart knock at my ribs,  
 Against the use of nature? Present fears  
 Are less than horrible imaginings:  
 My thought, whose murder yet is but fantastical,  
 Shakes so my single state of man that function 140

121 *enkindle you*] encourage or incite you.

130 *soliciting*] suggestion.

134 *suggestion*] temptation.

135 *unfix*] uplift, change from the normal arrangement.

137 *fears*] objects or causes of fear.

139 *fantastical*] fruit of the fancy or imagination. Cf. line 53, *supra*.

140-142 *Shakes so . . . what is not*] Shakes so my individuality (*i. e.*, the kingdom of my individual being) that my active faculties are crushed by speculation as to the future and nothing comes home to my perception but what belongs to an imaginary future

Is smother'd in surmise, and nothing is

• But what is not.

BAN. Look, how our partner 's rapt.

• MACB. [*Aside*] If chance will have me king, why,  
chance may crown me,

Without my stir.

BAN. New honours come upon him,  
Like our strange garments, cleave not to their mould  
But with the aid of use.

MACB. [*Aside*] Come what come may,  
Time and the hour runs through the roughest day.

BAN. Worthy Macbeth, we stay upon your leisure.

MACB. Give me your favour: my dull brain was  
• wrought

With things forgotten. Kind gentlemen, your pains 150  
Are register'd where every day I turn  
The leaf to read them. Let us toward the king.  
Think upon what hath chanced, and at more time,  
The interim having weigh'd it, let us speak  
Our free hearts each to other.

BAN. Very gladly.

MACB. Till then, enough. Come, friends. [*Exeunt.*]

142 *rapt*] engrossed. Cf. the Latin phrase "Extra se raptus."

147 *Time and the hour . . . day*] A proverbial phrase, also found in the Italian, meaning "Time and the opportunity will overcome all obstacles."

149 *your favour*] your pardon, indulgence.

149-150 *wrought With things forgotten*] exercised by trying to recall forgotten things.

151-152 *Are register'd . . . read them*] Are recorded on my heart's tablets.

## SCENE IV — FORRES

## THE PALACE

*Flourish. Enter DUNCAN, MALCOLM, DONALBAIN, LENNOX,  
and Attendants*

DUN. Is execution done on Cawdor? Are not  
Those in commission yet return'd?

MAL. My liege,  
They are not yet come back. But I have spoke  
With one that saw him die, who did report  
That very frankly he confess'd his treasons,  
Implored your highness' pardon and set forth  
A deep repentance: nothing in his life  
Became him like the leaving it; he died  
As one that had been studied in his death,  
To throw away the dearest thing he owed  
As 't were a careless trifle. 10

DUN. There's no art  
To find the mind's construction in the face:  
He was a gentleman on whom I built  
An absolute trust.

*Enter MACBETH, BANQUO, ROSS, and ANGUS*

O worthiest cousin!  
The sin of my ingratitude even now  
Was heavy on me: thou art so far before,

2 *Those in commission*] Those intrusted with the duty.

9 *studied in his death*] instructed in the art of dying

11 *careless*] unworthy of care, worthless

That swiftest wing of recompense is slow  
To overtake thee. Would thou hadst less deserved,  
That the proportion both of thanks and payment  
Might have been mine! only I have left to say, 20  
More is thy due than more than all can pay.

MACB. The service and the loyalty I owe,  
In doing it, pays itself. Your highness' part  
Is to receive our duties: and our duties  
Are to your throne and state children and servants;  
Which do but what they should, by doing every thing  
Safe toward your love and honour.

DUN. Welcome hither:  
I have begun to plant thee, and will labour  
To make thee full of growing. Noble Banquo,  
That hast no less deserved, nor must be known 30  
No less to have done so: let me infold thee  
And hold thee to my heart.

BAN. There if I grow,  
The harvest is your own.

DUN. My plenteous joys,  
Wanton in fulness, seek to hide themselves  
In drops of sorrow. Sons, kinsmen, thanes,  
And you whose places are the nearest, know,  
We will establish our estate upon  
Our eldest, Malcolm, whom we name hereafter  
The Prince of Cumberland: which honour must  
Not unaccompanied invest him only, 40

19 *the proportion*] the due amount.

27 *Safe toward*] Certain to promote.

34 *Wanton in fulness*] Of uncurbed luxuriance.

# MACBETH

ACT I

But signs of nobleness, like stars, shall shine  
On all deservers. From hence to Inverness,  
And bind us further to you.

MACB. The rest is labour, which is not used for you:  
I'll be myself the harbinger, and make joyful  
The hearing of my wife with your approach;  
So humbly take my leave.

DUN. My worthy Cawdor!

MACB. [*Aside*] The Prince of Cumberland! that is a  
step

On which I must fall down, or else o'erleap,  
For in my way it lies. Stars, hide your fires; . 50  
Let not light see my black and deep desires:  
The eye wink at the hand; yet let that be  
Which the eye fears, when it is done, to see. [*Exit.*]

DUN. True, worthy Banquo; he is full so valiant,  
And in his commendations I am fed;  
It is a banquet to me. Let's after him,  
Whose care is gone before to bid us welcome:  
It is a peerless kinsman. [*Flourish. Exeunt.*]

45 *harbinger*] an officer of the royal household, who went in advance to  
arrange for the king's lodgings on his journeys.

50 *Stars, hide your fires*] This scene takes place by day; but Macbeth  
appeals to the stars because his project of crime is too black to be  
perpetrated by day. Duncan has just mentioned "stars" at line 41,  
*supra*

52 *wink at*] ignore Shakespeare uses "wink" in the sense of closing fast  
the eye

54 *True, worthy Banquo; . . . valiant*] Duncan and Banquo seem to have  
been conferring apart as to Macbeth's merits. Duncan now admits  
that Macbeth is to the full as valiant as Banquo has described him.

## SCENE V — INVERNESS

## MACBETH'S CASTLE

*Enter LADY MACBETH, reading a letter*

LADY M. "They met me in the day of success; and I have learned by the perfectest report, they have more in them than mortal knowledge. When I burned in desire to question them further, they made themselves air, into which they vanished. Whiles I stood rapt in the wonder of it, came missives from the king, who all-hailed me "Thanq of Cawdor;" by which title, before, these weird sisters saluted me, and referred me to the coming on of time, with "Hail, King that shalt be!" This have I thought good to deliver thee, my dearest partner of greatness, that thou mightst not lose the dues of rejoicing, by being ignorant of what greatness is promised thee. Lay it to thy heart, and farewell."

11

Glamis thou art, and Cawdor, and shalt be  
 What thou art promised: yet do I fear thy nature;  
 It is too full o' the milk of human kindness  
 To catch the nearest way: thou wouldst be great;  
 Art not without ambition, but without  
 The illness should attend it: what thou wouldst highly,  
 That wouldst thou holily; wouldst not play false,  
 And yet wouldst wrongly win: thou 'ldst have, great  
 Glamis,

---

5 *missives*] bearers of missives.

17 *The illness*] the evil disposition.

19-22 *thou 'ldst have . . . undone*] The expression is obscure. Lady Macbeth fears to speak out what is in her mind. By "That which



*That which cries "Thus thou must do, if thou have it;  
 And that which rather thou dost fear to do  
 Than wishest should be undone." Hie thee hither,  
 That I may pour my spirits in thine ear,  
 And chastise with the valour of my tongue  
 All that impedes thee from the golden round,  
 Which fate and metaphysical aid doth seem  
 To have thee crown'd withal.*

*Enter a Messenger*

What is your tidings?

MESS. The king comes here to-night.

LADY M. Thou 'rt mad to say it:  
 Is not thy master with him? who, were 't so,  
 Would have inform'd for preparation.

MESS. So please you, it is true: our thane is coming:  
 One of my fellows had the speed of him,  
 Who, almost dead for breath, had scarcely more  
 Than would make up his message.

LADY M. Give him tending;  
 He brings great news.

*[Exit Messenger.]*

The raven himself is hoarse

cries" Lady Macbeth seems to refer to Duncan's crown, while "that which rather thou dost fear to do" refers to the act of murder which is needed to acquire the crown. "And that which . . . undone" is an independent clause in apposition to "Thus thou must do . . . have it."

25 *the golden round*] the golden crown.

26 *metaphysical*] supernatural.

*seem*] promise, threaten. Cf. I, ii, 48, *supra*.

30 *inform'd*] here used intransitively without an object, as II, i, 48, *infra*.

32 *had the speed of him*] outran him.

That croaks the fatal entrance of Duncan  
 Under my battlements. Come, you spirits  
 That tend on mortal thoughts, unsex me here,  
 And fill me, from the crown to the toe, top-full  
 Of direst cruelty! make thick my blood, 40  
 Stop up the access and passage to remorse,  
 That no compunctious visitings of nature  
 Shake my fell purpose, nor keep peace between,  
 The effect and it! Come to my woman's breasts,  
 And take my milk for gall, you murdering ministers,  
 Wherever in your sightless substances  
 You wait on nature's mischief! Come, thick night,  
 And pall thee in the dunnest smoke of hell,  
 That my keen knife see not the wound it makes,  
 Nor heaven peep through the blanket of the dark, 50  
 To cry "Hold, hold!"

38 *mortal thoughts*] fatal, destructive thoughts. Cf. III, iv, 81, *infra*,  
 "mortal murders."

39 *top-full*] full to the brim.

41 *remorse*] pity, compassion.

42 *compunctious visitings of nature*] conscience-moving fits of natural  
 remorse.

43-44 *nor keep peace . . . and it*] nor intervene so as to cause delay be-  
 tween or keep apart the murderous design and its execution. The  
 general figure is that of a peacemaker who prevents two opponents  
 from coming to close quarters with one another.

45 *take my milk for gall*] substitute gall for my milk

46 *sightless*] invisible. Cf. I, vii, 23, *infra*, and *Meas.* III, i, 124:  
 "viewless winds" and "careless," I, iv, 11, *supra*.

47 *You wait on nature's mischief*] You abet the destructive crime of which  
 human nature is capable.

48 *pall thee*] cover thyself up as with a pall or shroud.

50 *the blanket*] the thick curtain or covering.

# MACBETH

ACT I

*Enter MACBETH*

Great Glamis! worthy Cawdor!  
 Greater than both, by the all-hail hereafter!  
 Thy letters have transported me beyond  
 This ignorant present, and I feel now  
 The future in the instant.

MACB. My dearest love,  
 Duncan comes here to-night.

LADY M. And when goes hence?

MACB. To-morrow, as he purposes.

LADY M. O, never  
 Shall sun that morrow see!  
 Your face, my thane, is as a book where men  
 May read strange matters. To beguile the time, 60  
 Look like the time; bear welcome in your eye,  
 Your hand, your tongue: look like the innocent flower,  
 But be the serpent under 't. He that 's coming  
 Must be provided for: and you shall put  
 This night's great business into my dispatch;  
 Which shall to all our nights and days to come  
 Give solely sovereign sway and masterdom.

52 *by the all-hail hereafter*] Lady Macbeth is referring to the expressions  
 "all-hailed" and "Hail!" which figure in the letter from her husband,  
 which she has just read, lines 5 and 11, *supra*.

54 *This ignorant present*] This present condition of things, which has no  
 knowledge of what is to come hereafter.

55 *in the instant*] in the immediate present.

60 *strange matters*] matters to excite suspicion.

60-61 *To beguile the time, Look like the time*] In order to delude the world  
 or circumstance, look like the circumstance. Assume the expression of  
 countenance which befits the immediate occasion. Cf. I, vii, 81, *infra*.

# MACBETH

**LADY M.** Only look up, clear;

Leave all the rest to me.

[*Exeunt.* 70

*Hautboys and torches. Enter DUNCAN, MALCOLM, DONALBAIN, BANQUO, LENNOX, MACDUFF, ROSS, ANGUS, and Attendants*

DUN. This castle hath a pleasant seat; the air  
Nimbly and sweetly recommends itself  
Unto our gentle senses.

• BAN.                                This guest of summer,  
The temple-haunting martlet, does approve  
By his loved mansionry that the heaven's breath

69 *To alter [avour . . . fear]* To<sup>e</sup>change countenance always gives cause for fear or suspicion.

1 seat] site.

3 *our gentle senses*] our senses which are soothed by the nimble and sweet  
air.

4-5 *does approve* . . . *mansionry*] proves or shows by his love for residence here. "Mansionry" (i. e., residence) is a rare formation. The Folios spell the word *mansonry*, which has been interpreted as a possible misspelling of "masonry."

4 *marilet*] the house martin, though more properly the swift: Rowe's emendation for the Folio *Barlet*, which is unintelligible Cf *Merch of Ven*, II, ix, 28-29. "like the *marilet* Builds . . . on the outward wall." "Temple-haunting" suggests the martin's alleged preference for building a nest in buildings of imposing dimensions which are peacefully situated.

Smells wooingly here: no jutting, frieze,  
Buttress, nor coign of vantage, but this bird  
Hath made his pendent bed and procreant cradle:  
Where they most breed and haunt, I have observed  
The air is delicate.

*Enter* LADY MACBETH

DUN. See, see, our honour'd hostess! 10  
The love that follows us sometime is our trouble,  
Which still we thank as love. Herein I teach you  
How you shall bid God 'ild us for your pains,  
And thank us for your trouble.

LADY M. All our service  
In every point twice done, and then done double,  
Were poor and single business to contend  
Against those honours deep and broad wherewith  
Your majesty loads our house: for those of old,  
And the late dignities heap'd up to them,  
We rest your hermits.

DUN. Where's the thane of Cawdor? 20  
We coursed him at the heels, and had a purpose  
To be his purveyor: but he rides well,

---

6 *wooingly here*: no jutting, frieze] so as to invite a stay here: no projection  
nor any under-part of the cornice

9 *most*] Rowe's correction of Folio reading *must*.

11-12 *The love . . . as love*] The marks of affection which attend our  
progress mean that we put our hosts to much trouble, for which we are  
grateful, because we recognize the love which inspires it.

13 *God 'ild us*] God yield us, God reward or repay us.

16 *single*] simple, insignificant.

16-17 *contend Against*] vie with, match.

20 *hermits*] bedesmen, whose business it is to pray for their benefactors.

And his great love, sharp as his spur, hath hold him  
To his home before us. Fair and noble hostess,  
We are your guest to-night.

LADY M. Your servants ever  
Have theirs, themselves, and what is theirs, in compt,  
To make their audit at your highness' pleasure,  
Still to return your own.

DUN. Give me your hand;  
Conduct me to mine host: we love him highly,  
And shall continue our graces towards him. 30  
By your leave, hostess. [Exeunt.

## SCENE VII — MACBETH'S CASTLE

*Hautboys and torches. Enter a Sewer, and divers Servants with  
dishes and service, and pass over the stage. Then enter  
MACBETH*

MACB. If it were done, when 't is done, then 't were  
well

It were done quickly: if the assassination

22 *purveyor*] the officer of the court, who went in advance to provide  
food for the king on his progress Cf. I, iv, 45, *supra* "harbinger"

23 *holp*] an old form of "helped"

25-28 *Your servants ever . . . your own*] We and all who belong to us  
regard our lives and fortunes not as our personal property, but as  
property for which we are accountable to you; whenever you please  
to call us to our audit, we are always ready to give up to you what is  
your own. "In compt" means "subject to account."

Sc. vii (Stage Direction), *a Sewer*] a household officer who placed dishes  
on the table, and tasted them, before his master ate of them, by way  
of protecting his master against poison

1 *If it were done*] "Done" has here the sense of "finished once for all,"

# MACBETH

## ACT I

Could trammel up the consequence, and catch,  
 With his surcease, success; that but this blow  
 Might be the be-all and the end-all here,  
 But here, upon this bank and shoal of time,  
 We 'ld jump the life to come. But in these cases  
 We still have judgement here; that we but teach  
 Bloody instructions, which being taught return  
 To plague the inventor: this even-handed justice  
 Commends the ingredients of our poison'd chalice  
 To our own lips. He 's here in double trust:  
 First, as I am his kinsman and his subject,  
 Strong both against the deed; then, as his host,  
 Who should against his murderer shut the door,  
 Not bear the knife myself. Besides, this Duncan

10

"finally concluded." The sentence means that if when the deed were done, the matter ended there, then it were well if it were done quickly.

3 *trammel up*] entangle and hold securely (as in a net so that nothing should escape).

4 *his surcease*] its completion or accomplishment. "Surcease" is usually found in the legal sense of "arrest" or "stay of a suit."

6 *shoal*] a low-lying piece of land swept by the sea This is Theobald's emendation of the Folio reading *school*, which is an old way of spelling "shoal." *School* has been defended on the somewhat far-fetched ground that life on earth may well be likened to the state of instruction or probation preliminary to the life to come.

7 *jump*] run the risk of.

8-10 *we but teach . . . the inventor*] we give lessons in murderous crime to others, and our teaching returns to punish him who first devised it

11 *Commends*] Offers or recommends.

*ingredients*] Pope's emendation of the Folio reading *ingredience*, i. e., compound mixture. Cf. IV, i, 34, *infra*.

Hath borne his faculties so meek, hath been  
 So clear in his great office, that his virtues  
 Will plead like angels trumpet-tongued against  
 The deep damnation of his taking-off; 20  
 And pity, like a naked new-born babe,  
 Striding the blast, or heaven's cherubin horsed  
 Upon the sightless couriers of the air,  
 Shall blow the horrid deed in every eye,  
 That tears shall drown the wind. I have no spur  
 To prick the sides of my intent, but only  
 Vaulting ambition, which o'erleaps itself  
 And falls on the other.

*Enter* LADY MACBETH

How now! what news?

LADY M. He has almost supp'd: why have you left  
 the chamber? 29

MACB. Hath he ask'd for me?

17 *faculties*] prerogatives.

18 *clear*] guileless, spotless Cf II, i, 28, *infra*.

22 *Striding the blast . . horsed*] Cf *Psalm* xviii, 10 (Prayer-book version), "He rode upon the cherubins and did fly, he came flying upon the wings of the wind." Shakespeare here uses "cherubin" correctly as a plural. Elsewhere he has "cherubins" Cf *Cymb*, II, iv, 88.

23 *sightless couriers of the air*] invisible winds. Cf. I, v, 46, *supra*, and note.

25 *tears shall drown the wind*] The image is from a storm of rain laying a high wind. Cf *Troil. and Cress.*, IV, iv, 52: "Where are my tears? rain, to lay this wind."

27 *o'erleaps itself*] overshoots the mark

28 *on the other*] The Folios read *on th' other*. Rowe assumed that Mac-



# MACBETH

## ACT I

LADY M. Know you not he has?

MACB. We will proceed no further in this business:  
He hath honour'd me of late; and I have bought  
Golden opinions from all sorts of people,  
Which would be worn now in their newest gloss,  
Not cast aside so soon.

LADY M. Was the hope drunk  
Wherein you dress'd yourself? hath it slept since?  
And wakes it now, to look so green and pale  
At what it did so freely? From this time  
Such I account thy love. Art thou afraid  
To be the same in thine own act and valour . 40  
As thou art in desire? Wouldst thou have that  
Which thou esteem'st the ornament of life,  
And live a coward in thine own esteem,  
Letting "I dare not" wait upon "I would,"  
Like the poor cat i' the adage?

MACB. Prithee, peace:

beth leaves the sentence unfinished Other editors add the word  
*side* But "side" may well be left to be understood from the plural  
"sides" line 26, and the full stop after "other" may be retained.

32 *bought*] gained, acquired.

34 *would be*] should be, ought to be

35-36 *Was the hope . . . slept since?*] Cf for this extravagant figure  
*K. John*, IV, ii, 116-117: "O, where hath our intelligence been  
*drunk?* Where hath it *slept?*"

37 *so green and pale*] like the appearance of a drunkard waking from  
his debauch.

39 *Such . . . love*] Lady Macbeth compares her husband's love to a  
mere drunken fancy.

45 *the poor cat i' the adage*] Cf. John Heywood's *Proverbs*, 1546: "The cat  
would eat fish, but would not wet her feet."



# MACBETH

## ACT I

And we'll not fail. When Duncan is asleep —  
 Whereto the rather shall his day's hard journey  
 Soundly invite him — his two chamberlains  
 Will I with wine and wassail so convince,  
 That memory, the warder of the brain,  
 Shall be a fume, and the receipt of reason  
 A limbec only: when in swinish sleep  
 Their drenched natures lie as in a death,  
 What cannot you and I perform upon  
 The unguarded Duncan? what not put upon  
 His spongy officers, who shall bear the guilt  
 Of our great quell?

70

MACB. Bring forth men-children only;  
 For thy undaunted mettle should compose  
 Nothing but males. Will it not be received,  
 When we have mark'd with blood those sleepy two  
 Of his own chamber, and used their very daggers,  
 That they have done 't?

LADY M. Who dares receive it other,  
 As we shall make our griefs and clamour roar  
 Upon his death?

64 *wassail*] carousing.

*convince*] conquer, overpower.

66-67 *Shall be a fume . . . A limbec only*] Shall be a vapour, and the receptacle of reason shall be no more than an "alembic," i. e., the tubular cap of the still, through which the vapour passes before it reaches the condensing chamber. The imagery is derived from the process of distilling strong liquor.

71 *spongy*] soaked in liquor.

72 *quell*] murder. Cf. *2 Hen. IV.* II, i, 50: "man-queller," i. e., murderer.

74 *received*] accepted, recognised.

78 *As*] Inasmuch as.

MACB. I am settled, and bend up  
Each corporal agent to this terrible feat. 80  
Away, and mock the time with fairest show:  
False face must hide what the false heart doth know.  
[*Exeunt.*]

- 
- 79-80 *bend up* . . . *feat*] The metaphor is from the stringing of a bow.  
Cf *Hen. V*, III, i, 16-17: "*bend up* every spirit To his full height "  
81 *mock the time* . . . *show*] Cf. I, v, 60-61, *supra*: "To beguile the time,  
Look like the time."



ACT SECOND — SCENE I — INVERNESS  
COURT OF MACBETH'S CASTLE

*Enter BANQUO, and FLEANCE bearing a torch before him*

BANQUO



OW GOES THE NIGHT,  
boy?

FLE. The moon is down; I  
have not heard the clock.

BAN. And she goes down at  
twelve.

FLE. I take 't, 't is later, sir.

BAN. Hold, take my sword.  
There 's husbandry in heaven,  
Their candles are all out. Take  
thee that too.

A heavy summons lies like lead  
upon me,

And yet I would not sleep. Merciful powers,  
Restrain in me the cursed thoughts that nature  
Gives way to in repose!

4 husbandry in heaven] thrift, frugality in heaven.

*Enter MACBETH, and a Servant with a torch*

Give me my sword.

Who 's there?

10

MACB. A friend.

BAN. What, sir, not yet at rest? The king's a-bed:  
He hath been in unusual pleasure, and  
Sent forth great largess to your offices:  
This diamond he greets your wife withal,  
By the name of most kind hostess; and shut up  
In measureless content.

MACB. Being unprepared,  
Our will became the servant to defect,  
Which else should free have wrought.

BAN. All 's well.  
I dreamt last night of the three weird sisters:  
To you they have show'd some truth.

20

MACB. I think not of them:

5 *Their*] "Heaven" is plural; a common usage. Cf *Pericles*, I, iv, 16. "if  
heaven slumber, while *their* creatures want." For "candles," cf  
*Rom and Jul.*, III, v, 9: "Night's candles are burnt out"

*Take thee that too*] Banquo hands Fleance his dirk or dagger as well as  
his sword.

14 *offices*] the rooms occupied by servants in great houses. Thus the Folios  
Rowe's change to *officers*, though generally adopted, is not essential.

16 *shut up*] the phrase is abrupt and elliptical. It probably means that the  
king has shut himself up, encased himself, or perhaps composed him-  
self to slumber.

17-19 *Being unprepared . . . wrought*] "Our will" is the antecedent of  
"which." Macbeth means that the entertainment proved defective  
owing to want of preparation. He and his wife only had their will-  
ingness to serve the king, which, had they received adequate notice,  
would have expressed itself without any restriction.

Yet, when we can entreat an hour to serve,  
We would spend it in some words upon that business,  
If you would grant the time.

BAN. At your kind'st leisure.

MACB. If you shall cleave to my consent, when 't is,  
It shall make honour for you.

BAN. So I lose none  
In seeking to augment it, but still keep  
My bosom franchised and allegiance clear,  
I shall be counsell'd.

MACB. Good repose the while!

BAN. Thanks, sir: the like to you! 30

[*Exeunt Banquo and Fleance.*]

MACB. Go bid thy mistress, when my drink is ready,  
She strike upon the bell. Get thee to bed. [*Exit Servant.*]  
Is this a dagger which I see before me,  
The handle toward my hand? Come, let me clutch thee.  
I have thee not, and yet I see thee still.  
Art thou not, fatal vision, sensible  
To feeling as to sight? or art thou but

22 *when we can . . . serve*] when we can prevail on an hour of your time  
to be at our disposal Macbeth's courtesy is extravagantly strained.  
His use of the plural "we" probably implies that he is speaking for  
himself and his wife, as in his preceding speech.

25 *If you . . . consent, when 't is*] "Consent" often stands for a party  
or a group of men united by a common agreement. The line means,  
"If you shall adhere to my party or partisanship when the time  
comes for our confidential interview"

28 *franchised*] free (from sin). Cf. *Hamlet*, III, ii, 236: "We that have  
*free souls.*"

*clear*] guileless, spotless. Cf. I, vii, 18, *supra*.

36-37 *sensible To feeling*] capable of perception by the touch.

A dagger of the mind, a false creation,  
 Proceeding from the heat-oppressed brain?  
 I see thee yet, in form as palpable  
 As this which now I draw.

40

Thou marshall'st me the way that I was going;  
 And such an instrument I was to use.  
 Mine eyes are made the fools o' the other senses,  
 Or else worth all the rest: I see thee still;  
 And on thy blade and dudgeon gouts of blood,  
 Which was not so before. There's no such thing:  
 It is the bloody business which informs  
 Thus to mine eyes. Now o'er the one half-world  
 Nature seems dead, and wicked dreams abuse  
 The curtain'd sleep; witchcraft celebrates  
 Pale Hecate's offerings; and wither'd murder,

50

44-45 *Mine eyes . . . all the rest*] If the dagger be imaginary, then my eyes are proved to be fools by the other senses which show it to be unreal, if the dagger be real, then my sight, which alone presents the truth, is worth all my other senses put together.

46 *dudgeon*] handle  
*gouts*] drops; from the French "goutte." The word is found nowhere else in Elizabethan literature.

48 *informs*] offers information or instruction. The verb is used intransitively, as at I, v, 30, *supra*.

49 *the one half-world*] this hemisphere.

51-52 *witchcraft . . . Hecate's offerings*] witchcraft now offers sacrifice to pale Hecate, the goddess of the infernal world. Cf. Seneca's *Medea*, I, 6-7: "Tacitisque praebens conscium sacris jubar, Hecate triformis" (triple Hecate, who giveth forth rays cognisant of secret mysteries), and Ovid's *Met.*, VII, 74-75, where reference is made to an altar dedicated to Hecate, — a passage into which Golding, in his translation, interpolates the remark that of her "the witches holde as of their goddesses." "Hecate" is almost always a dissyllable in Shakespeare.



Alarum'd by his sentinel, the wolf,  
 Whose howl's his watch, thus with his stealthy pace,  
 With Tarquin's ravishing strides, towards his design  
 Moves like a ghost. Thou sure and firm-set earth,  
 Hear not my steps, which way they walk, for fear  
 Thy very stones prate of my whereabout,  
 And take the present horror from the time,  
 Which now suits with it. Whiles I threat, he lives: 60  
 Words to the heat of deeds too cold breath gives.

I go, and it is done: the bell invites me. [A bell rings.  
 Hear it not, Duncan, for it is a knell  
 That summons thee to heaven, or to hell. [Exit.

## SCENE II — THE SAME

Enter LADY MACBETH

LADY M. That which hath made them drunk hath  
 made me bold;  
 What hath quench'd them hath given me fire. Hark!  
 Peace!

54 *Whose howl's his watch*] The wolf's howls, which he emits by night, are likened to the periodic cries of a night watchman or sentinel.

55 *strides*] Pope's emendation for the Folio reading *sides*. The word suggests the stealthy movement of the ravisher. In *Lucrece*, Shakespeare wrote of Tarquin "Into the chamber wickedly he stalks" (line 365) and after the rape "through the dark night he *stealeth*" (line 729).

56 *sure*] Pope's correction of the Folio reading *sour* or *soure*.

59-60 *take the present horror . . . suits with it*] and catch (like an infectious disease) from this hour the present horror which suits well with the (crime appointed for this) hour.

61 *Words . . . gives*] The singular verb with a plural subject is no uncommon construction in Elizabethan English.

# MACBETH

MACB. [Within] Who's there? what, ho!

*Enter* MACBETH

MACB. I have done the deed. Didst thou not hear a  
noise?

LADY M. I heard the owl scream and the crickets cry.  
Did not you speak?

**MACB.** When?

LADY M.                      Now.

- [ 39 ]

# MACBETH

ACT II

MACB. As I descended?

LADY M. Ay.

MACB. Hark!

Who lies i' the second chamber?

LADY M. Donalbain.

MACB. This is a sorry sight. [*Looking on his hands.* 20

LADY M. A foolish thought, to say a sorry sight.

MACB. There 's one did laugh in's sleep, and one  
cried "Murder!"

That they did wake each other: I stood and heard them:  
But they did say their prayers, and address'd them  
Again to sleep.

LADY M. There are two lodged together.

MACB. One cried "God bless us!" and "Amen" the  
other,

As they had seen me with these hangman's hands:

Listening their fear, I could not say "Amen,"

When they did say "God bless us!"

LADY M. Consider it not so deeply. 30

MACB. But wherefore could not I pronounce  
"Amen"?

I had most need of blessing, and "Amen"

Stuck in my throat.

LADY M. These deeds must not be thought  
After these ways; so, it will make us mad.

MACB. Methought I heard a voice cry "Sleep no  
more!"

27 *As they . . . hands*] As if they had seen me with these executioner's  
or butcher's hands.

28 *Listening their fear*] Overhearing their expressions of fear.

35 *I heard a voice cry*] The punctuation of the Folio leaves it uncertain as

Macbeth does murder sleep" — the innocent sleep,  
 Sleep that knits up the ravell'd sleeve of care,  
 The death of each day's life, sore labour's bath,  
 Balm of hurt minds, great nature's second course,  
 Chief nourisher in life's feast, —

LADY M. What do you mean? 40

MACB. Still it cried "Sleep no more!" to all the  
 house:

"Glamis hath murder'd sleep, and therefore Cawdor  
 Shall sleep no more: Macbeth shall sleep no more."

LADY M. Who was it that thus cried? Why, worthy  
 thane,

You do unbend your noble strength, to think  
 So brainsickly of things. Go get some water,  
 And wash this filthy witness from your hand.  
 Why did you bring these daggers from the place?  
 They must lie there: go carry them, and smear  
 The sleepy grooms with blood.

MACB. I'll go no more: 50

I am afraid to think what I have done;

Look on 't again I dare not.

to how much of the speech that follows is intended for the cry of the voice. Johnson was probably right in treating all the words after *murder sleep* as Macbeth's comment.

37 *ravell'd sleeve*] tangled raw silk, which the weaver knits into smooth skeins. The Folios spell *sleeue*, but *sleeve* (i. e., floss-silk) is clearly intended

42-43 *Glamis . . sleep no more*] Macbeth is warned that each acquisition of new dignity deprives him more and more effectually of command of sleep, which is nature's chief restorative influence.

46 *brainsickly*] crazily, madly.

50 *grooms*] menials, as in line 5, *supra*.

**ACT II**

MACB. Whence is that knocking?  
How is 't with me, when every noise appals me?  
What hands are here? ha! they pluck out mine  
eyes!

56-57 *I'll gild . . . their guilt*] a favourite quibble of Shakespeare Cf. *2 Hen IV*, IV, v, 129, "England shall double *gild* his treble *guilt*." "Golden" was not infrequently employed as an epithet to blood. Cf. II, iii, 111, *infra*, and *K John*, II, i, 316

62 *incarnadine*] colour with red dye.

63 *one red*] a single expanse of red. The Folios place after *one* a comma, which may best be omitted.

## SCENE III

## MACBETH

*Re-enter* LADY MACBETH

LADY M. My hands are of your colour, but I shame  
To wear a heart so white. [*Knocking within*] I hear a  
knocking

At the south entry: retire we to our chamber:

A little water clears us of this deed:

How easy is it then! Your constancy

Hath left you unattended. [*Knocking within.*] Hark! more  
knocking:

Get on your nightgown, lest occasion call us

70

And show us to be watchers: be not lost

So poorly in your thoughts.

MACB. To know my deed, 't were best not know  
myself. [*Knocking within.*]

Wake Duncan with thy knocking! I would thou  
couldst! [*Exeunt.*]

## SCENE III — THE SAME

*Enter a Porter. Knocking within*

PORTER. Here 's a knocking indeed! If a man were  
porter of hell-gate, he should have old turning the key.  
[*Knocking within*] Knock, knock, knock! Who 's there, i'

69 *left you unattended*] deserted you.

70 *nightgown*] robe de chambre, dressing-gown. Cf. V, i, 5, *infra*.

73 *To know . . . myself*] Rather than fully to realise what I have done, I  
would prefer to lose all consciousness of my being.

2 *old turning*] any amount of turning: "old" is a colloquial intensive.  
"Vecchio" is similarly used in Italian.

the name of Beelzebub? Here's a farmer, that hanged himself on th' expectation of plenty: come in time; have napkins enow about you; here you 'll sweat for 't. [*Knocking within.*] Knock, knock! Who's there, in th' other devil's name? Faith, here's an equivocator, that could swear in both the scales against either scale; who committed treason enough for God's sake, yet could not equivocate to heaven: O, come in, equivocator. [*Knocking within.*] Knock, knock, knock! Who's there? Faith, here's an English tailor come hither, for stealing out of a French hose: come in, tailor; here you may roast your goose. [*Knocking within.*] Knock, knock; never at quiet! What are you? But this place is too cold for hell. I'll devil-porter it no further: I had thought to have let in some of all professions, that go the primrose

4-5 *a farmer . . . plenty*] many stories have been told of farmers who, having hoarded grain with a view to selling at a high price in time of an anticipated scarcity, were ruined by an unexpected plenty, and a consequent fall of price.

5 *come in time*] be in good time, hurry up.

6 *napkins*] pocket-handkerchiefs.

8 *an equivocator*] A reference is commonly detected here to the Jesuit Henry Garnett, who at his trial for complicity in the Gunpowder Plot, 28 March, 1606, boldly defended the doctrine of equivocation.

13-14 *here's an English . . . French hose*] the English tailor's offence is that of borrowing French fashions. French hose or knickerbockers were commonly of two patterns, one very full and loose and the other very tight. The speaker was probably thinking of the first kind.

15 *goose*] the tailor's flat smoothing-iron.

18-19 *the primrose way*] Cf. *Hamlet*, I, iii, 50: "the *primrose* (*i. e.*, pleasant) *path* of dalliance"; and *All's Well*, IV, v, 48-49: "the *flowery way* that leads . . . to the great fire."

way to the everlasting bonfire. [*Knocking within.*] Anon, anon! I pray you, remember the porter. [*Opens the gate.*]

*Enter MACDUFF and LENNOX*

MACD. Was it so late, friend, ere you went to bed,  
That you do lie so late? 22

PORT. Faith, sir, we were carousing till the second  
cock: and drink, sir, is a great provoker of three  
things.

MACD. What three things does drink especially pro-  
voke?

PORT. Marry, sir, nose-painting, sleep and urine.  
Lechery, sir, it provokes and unprovokes; it provokes  
the desire, but it takes away the performance: therefore  
much drink may be said to be an equivocator with  
lechery: it makes him and it mars him; it sets him on  
and it takes him off; it persuades him and disheartens  
him; makes him stand to and not stand to; in con-  
clusion, equivocates him in a sleep, and giving him the  
lie, leaves him.

MACD. I believe drink gave thee the lie last night. 35

PORT. That it did, sir, i' the very throat on me: but  
I requited him for his lie, and, I think, being too strong

23-24 *the second cock*] about three o'clock in the morning. Cf. *Rom. and Jul.*, IV, iv, 3-4: "*the second cock* hath crow'd; . . . 't is three o'clock."

34 *in a sleep*] into a sleep.

*giving him the lie*] a quibbling expression for "making him lie down."



# MACBETH

## ACT II

for him, though he took up my legs sometime, yet I made a shift to cast him.

MACD. Is thy master stirring?

40

*Enter MACBETH*

Our knocking has awaked him; here he comes.

LEN. Good morrow, noble sir.

MACB. Good morrow, both.

MACD. Is the king stirring, worthy thane?

MACB. Not yet.

MACD. He did command me to call timely on him :  
I have almost slipp'd the hour.

MACB. I'll bring you to him.

MACD. I know this is a joyful trouble to you;  
But yet 't is one.

MACB. The labour we delight in physics pain.  
This is the door.

MACD. I'll make so bold to call,  
For 't is my limited service.

[*Exit.* 50]

LEN. Goes the king hence to-day?

MACB. He does: he did appoint so.

LEN. The night has been unruly: where we lay,  
Our chimneys were blown down, and, as they say,  
Lamentings heard i' the air, strange screams of death,

39 *cast*] the word is used quibblingly in the double sense of "throw" and "vomit."

46 *a joyful trouble*] Cf I, vi, 10-14, *supra*, where Duncan speaks of the "trouble" his visit imposes on his host.

48 *physics*] relieves, neutralises.

50 *limited service*] appointed service.

## SCENE III

## MACBETH

And prophesying with accents terrible  
 Of dire combustion and confused events  
 New hatch'd to the woful time: the obscure bird  
 Clamour'd the livelong night: some say, the earth  
 Was feverous and did shake.

MACB. 'T was a rough night.

LEN. My young remembrance cannot parallel 60  
 A fellow to it.

*Re-enter MACDUFF*

MACD. O horror, horror, horror! Tongue nor heart  
 Cannot conceive nor name thee.

MACB. } What's the matter?  
 LEN. }

MACD. Confusion now hath made his masterpiece.  
 Most sacrilegious murder hath broke ope  
 The Lord's anointed temple, and stole thence  
 The life o' the building.

MACB. What is't you say? the life?

56 *combustion*] tumult (without precise reference to burning). Cf.

*Henry VIII*, V, iv, 47: "a *combustion* in the state"

56-57 *events New hatch'd . . . time*] events in the state of being newly  
 hatched to harmonise with a sorrowful state of things. Cf *2 Hen IV*,  
 III, i, 82-86: "a man may *prophesy* . . . of things *As yet not come to*  
*life* . . . Such *things* become the *hatch* and brood of *time*"

57 *the obscure bird*] the clandestine, dark-haunting bird, *i. e.*, the owl

59 *Was feverous . . . shake*] Common symptoms of an ague fit.

64 *Confusion*] Destruction, ruin: a bold personification

66 *The Lord's anointed temple*] Two biblical expressions are confused  
 here. "he is the Lord's anointed" (*1 Sam*, xxiv, 10), and "ye are  
 the *temple* of the living God" (*2 Cor.*, vi, 16).

# MACBETH

## ACT II

LEN. Mean you his majesty?

MACD. *Approach the chamber, and destroy your sight*

With a new Gorgon: do not bid me speak; 70  
See, and then speak yourselves.

*[Exeunt Macbeth and Lennox.]*

Awake, awake!

Ring the alarum-bell. Murder and treason!  
Banquo and Donalbain! Malcolm! awake!  
Shake off this downy sleep, death's counterfeit,  
And look on death itself! up, up, and see  
The great doom's image! Malcolm! Banquo!  
As from your graves rise up, and walk like sprites,  
To countenance this horror. Ring the bell. *[Bell rings.]*

*Enter LADY MACBETH*

LADY M. What's the business,  
That such a hideous trumpet calls to parley 80  
The sleepers of the house? speak, speak!

MACD. O gentle lady,  
'Tis not for you to hear what I can speak:  
The repetition, in a woman's ear,  
Would murder as it fell.

69-70 *destroy . . . Gorgon*] The head of Medusa, the Gorgon had the power of turning the spectator to stone. Cf. Ovid's *Met.*, V, 189-210  
74 *sleep, death's counterfeit*] Cf. *Muds N Dr.*, III, ii, 364: "death-counterfeiting sleep"  
78 *To countenance*] To act in harmony with.

*Enter BANQUO*

*O Banquo, Banquo !*

. Our royal master 's murder'd.

LADY M. Woe, alas !

What, in our house ?

BAN. Too cruel any where.

Dear Duff, I prithee, contradict thyself,

And say it is not so.

*Re-enter MACBETH and LENNOX, with ROSS*

MACB. Had I but died an hour before this chance,  
I had lived a blessed time; for from this instant 90  
There 's nothing serious in mortality:  
All is but toys: renown and grace is dead;  
The wine of life is drawn, and the mere lees  
Is left this vault to brag of.

*Enter MALCOLM and DONALBAIN*

DON. What is amiss ?

MACB. You are, and do not know't:  
The spring, the head, the fountain of your blood  
Is stopp'd; the very source of it is stopp'd.

MACD. Your royal father 's murder'd.

MAL. O, by whom ?

89-90 *Had I but died . . . time*] Cf. *Wint. Tale*, IV, iv, 453-454. "If I  
might die within this hour, I have lived To die when I desire."

94 *this vault*] The world, which is vaulted by the sky, is likened to an  
empty wine-vault or cellar.

# MACBETH

## ACT II

LEN. Those of his chamber, as it seem'd, had  
done't:  
Their hands and faces were all badged with blood; 100  
So were their daggers, which unwiped we found  
Upon their pillows:  
They stared, and were distracted; no man's life  
Was to be trusted with them.

MACB. O, yet I do repent me of my fury,  
That I did kill them.

MACD. Wherefore did you so?

MACB. Who can be wise, amazed, temperate and  
furious,  
Loyal and neutral, in a moment? No man:  
The expedition of my violent love  
Outrun the pauser reason. Here lay Duncan, 110  
His silver skin laced with his golden blood,  
And his gash'd stabs look'd like a breach in nature  
For ruin's wasteful entrance: there, the murderers,  
Steep'd in the colours of their trade, their daggers  
Unmannerly breech'd with gore: who could refrain,  
That had a heart to love, and in that heart  
Courage to make 's love known?

LADY M. Help me hence, ho!

100 *badged*] marked. Cf. 2 *Hen. VI*, III, ii, 200: "murder's crimson badge."

110 *the pauser reason*] the reason which checks impulse.

111-115 *His silver skin . . . gore*] These stilted metaphors are the studied language of hypocrisy. For "golden blood" see note on II, ii, 56-57, *supra*

115 *Unmannerly breech'd*] Untidily or foully covered with blood, as if with breeches.

MACD. Look to the lady.

MAL. [*Aside to Don.*] Why do we hold our tongues,  
That most may claim this argument for ours?

DON. [*Aside to Mal.*] What should be spoken here,  
where our fate, 120  
Hid in an auger-hole, may rush, and seize us?  
Let's away;

Our tears are not yet brew'd.

MAL. [*Aside to Don.*] Nor our strong sorrow  
Upon the foot of motion.

BAN. Look to the lady:

[*Lady Macbeth is carried out.*]

And when we have our naked frailties hid,  
That suffer in exposure, let us meet,  
And question this most bloody piece of work,  
To know it further. Fears and scruples shake us:  
In the great hand of God I stand, and thence  
Against the undivulged pretence I fight 130  
Of treasonous malice.

MACD. And so do I.

ALL. So all.

119 *argument*] theme.

121 *Hid in an auger-hole*] Concealed in the minutest hiding place.

"Auger-hole" means any small cranny. It is unlikely that the bore of a pistol, as has been suggested, is intended.

124 *Upon the foot of motion*] In full activity, in active working.

125 *when we . . . hid*] when we have clothed our half-clothed bodies.

The porter had already pointed out that "this place is too cold for hell" (line 16, *supra*)

130-131 *Against the undivulged . . . malice*] I fight against any further design that has not yet come to light of treasonable villany.

# MACBETH

## ACT II

MACB. Let's briefly put on manly readiness,  
And meet it the hall together.

ALL. Well contented.

*[Exeunt all but Malcolm and Donalbain.]*

MAL. What will you do? Let's not consort with  
them:

To show an unfelt sorrow is an office  
Which the false man does easy. I'll to England.

DON. To Ireland, I; our separated fortune  
Shall keep us both the safer: where we are  
There's daggers in men's smiles: the near in blood,  
The nearer bloody.

MAL. This murderous shaft that's shot 140  
Hath not yet lighted, and our safest way  
Is to avoid the aim. Therefore to horse;  
And let us not be dainty of leave-taking,  
But shift away: there's warrant in that theft  
Which steals itself when there's no mercy left. *[Exeunt.]*

132 *manly readiness*] attire or equipment of men, soldiers' gear; the antithesis of "naked frailties" (line 125, *supra*). '.

139-140 *the near . . . bloody*] The closer in blood relationship, the greater the danger of shedding one's blood, of being the objects of attack. "Near" is the old form of the comparative "nearer."

140-142 *This murderous shaft . . . aim*] The end for which this murder was committed has not yet been reached. The king's sons still live, and stand in the way of any usurper's approach to the throne.

143 *dainty of leave-taking*] punctilious about saying farewell.

144 *shift away*] go off stealthily.

## SCENE IV — OUTSIDE MACBETH'S CASTLE

*Enter Ross with an old Man*

OLD M. Threescore and ten I can remember well:  
 Within the volume of which time I have seen  
 Hours dreadful and things strange, but this sore night  
 Hath trifled former knowings.

Ross. Ah, good father,  
 Thou seest, the heavens, as troubled with man's act,  
 Threaten his bloody stage: by the clock 't is day,  
 And yet dark night strangles the travelling lamp:  
 'Is 't night's predominance, or the day's shame,  
 That darkness does the face of earth entomb,  
 When living light should kiss it?

OLD M. 'T is unnatural, 10  
 Even like the deed that 's done. On Tuesday last  
 A falcon towering in her pride of place  
 Was by a mousing owl hawk'd at and kill'd.

Ross. And Duncan's horses — a thing most strange  
 and certain —  
 Beauteous and swift, the minions of their race,

4 *Hath trifled former knowings*] Has made trifling or insignificant (by comparison) previous experiences.

7 *the travelling lamp*] the sun.

8 *the day's shame*] the day's reluctance to show itself, owing to the king's murder.

12 *towering in her pride of place*] soaring to her highest pitch

13 *a mousing owl*] an owl whose ordinary prey was a mouse.

15 *minions*] darlings, beauties, favourite specimens.



# MACBETH

## ACT II

Turn'd wild in nature, broke their stalls, flung out,  
Contending 'gainst obedience, as they would make  
War with mankind.

OLD M. 'Tis said they eat each other.

ROSS. They did so, to the amazement of mine eyes,  
That look'd upon 't.

*Enter MACDUFF*

Here comes the good Macduff. 20

How goes the world, sir, now?

MACD. Why, see you not?

ROSS. Is 't known who did this more than bloody  
deed?

MACD. Those that Macbeth hath slain.

ROSS. Alas, the day!

What good could they pretend?

MACD. They were suborn'd:

Malcolm and Donalbain, the king's two sons,  
Are stol'n away and fled, which puts upon them  
Suspicion of the deed.

ROSS. 'Gainst nature still:

Thrifless ambition, that wilt ravin up  
Thine own life's means! Then 't is most like  
The sovereignty will fall upon Macbeth. 30

16 *Turn'd wild in nature*] Returned to a state of savagery.

18 *'T is said . . . other*] Holinshed notes that the "horses in Lothian, being of singular beauty and swiftness, did eat their own flesh" on the occasion of the murder of Duff, King of Scotland, in 972.

24 *pretend*] intend, aim at.

28 *ravin up*] greedily devour. Cf. IV, i, 24, *infra*, and "*ravin down*," *Meas. for Meas.*, I, ii, 123.

MACD. He is already named, and gone to Scone  
To be invested.

ROSS. Where is Duncan's body?

• MACD. Carried to Colme-kill,  
The sacred storehouse of his predecessors  
And guardian of their bones.

ROSS. Will you to Scone?

MACD. No, cousin, I'll to Fife.

ROSS. Well, I will thither.

MACD. Well, may you see things well done there:  
adieu!

Lest our old robes sit easier than our new!

ROSS. Farewell, father.

• OLD M. God's benison go with you, and with those 40  
That would make good of bad and friends of foes!

[*Exeunt.*]

33 *Colme-kill*] the island of Iona, the burial place of the early kings of Scotland. The word literally means the chapel or cell of St. Columba, who first preached Christianity there.

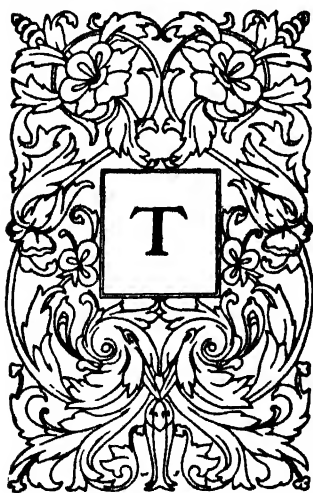


# ACT THIRD — SCENE I    FORRES

## THE PALACE

*Enter BANQUO*

BANQUO



HOW HAST IT NOW:

King, Cawdor, Glamis, all,  
As the weird women promised,  
and I fear

Thou play'dst most foully for 't:  
yet it was said

It should not stand in thy pos-  
terity,

But that myself should be the  
root and father

Of many kings. If there come  
truth from them —

As upon thee, Macbeth, their  
speeches shine —

Why, by the verities on thee made good,

May they not be my oracles as well

And set me up in hope? But hush, no more.

10

2 *weird*] Theobald's emendation of the *weyard* or *weyward* of the Folios.

Cf. I, iii, 32, *supra*; III, iv, 133, and IV, i, 136, *infra*.

## SCENE I

## MACBETH

*Sennet sounded. Enter MACBETH, as king; LADY MACBETH, as queen; LENNOX, ROSS, Lords, Ladies, and Attendants*

MACB. Here 's our chief guest.

LADY M. If he had been forgotten,  
It had been as a gap in our great feast,  
And all-thing unbecoming.

MACB. To-night we hold a solemn supper, sir,  
And I 'll request your presence.

BAN. Let your highness  
Command upon me, to the which my duties  
Are with a most indissoluble tie  
For ever knit.

MACB. Ride you this afternoon?

BAN. Ay, my good lord.

MACB. We should have else desired your good  
advice,

20

Which still hath been both grave and prosperous,  
In this day's council; but, we 'll take to-morrow.  
Is 't far you ride?

BAN. As far, my lord, as will fill up the time  
'Twixt this and supper: go not my horse the better,

4 *stand*] stay, keep.

7 *shine*] shed conspicuous light or favour.

11 (Stage Direction) *Sennet sounded*] A set of notes sounded on a trumpet.

13 *all-thing*] altogether. Thus the First Folio. The Second Folio has  
*all-things* and the Third and Fourth *all things*.

14 *splemn*] formal, ceremonial.

21 *grave and prosperous*] weighty and auspicious, *i. e.*, tending to a prosperous issue.

22 *take*] appoint.

25 *go not my horse the better*] if my horse go not sufficiently well. The com-

# MACBETH

## ACT III

I must become a borrower of the night  
For a dark hour or twain.

MACB. Fail not our feast.

BAN. My lord, I will not.

MACB. We hear our bloody cousins are bestow'd  
In England and in Ireland, not confessing 30  
Their cruel parricide, filling their hearers  
With strange invention: but of that to-morrow,  
When therewithal we shall have cause of state  
Craving us jointly. Hie you to horse: adieu,  
Till you return at night. Goes Fleance with you?

BAN. Ay, my good lord: our time does call upon 's.

MACB. I wish your horses swift and sure of foot,  
And so I do commend you to their backs.  
Farewell. [Exit Banquo.]

Let every man be master of his time 40  
Till seven at night; to make society  
The sweeter welcome, we will keep ourself  
Till supper-time alone: while then, God be with you!

*[Exeunt all but Macbeth and an Attendant.]*

Sirrah, a word with you: attend those men  
Our pleasure?

ATTEND. They are, my lord, without the palace-  
gate.

parative "the better" has here a positive significance of "up to the mark" Cf. *Lear*, IV, iii, 18-19: "her smiles and tears Were like a better way."

33 *cause of state*] political business.

43 *while then*] till then. The metre of the line is irregular. The common greeting, "God be with you," i. e., good-bye, was doubtless slurred in pronunciation.

MACB. Bring them before us. [Exit Attendant.]

To be thus is nothing;

But to be safely thus: our fears in Banquo  
Stick deep; and in his royalty of nature  
Reigns that which would be fear'd: 't is much he  
dares,

50

And, to that dauntless temper of his mind,  
He hath a wisdom that doth guide his valour  
To act in safety. There is none but he  
Whose being I do fear: and under him  
My Genius is rebuked, as it is said  
Mark Antony's was by Cæsar. He chid the sisters,  
When first they put the name of king upon me,  
And bade them speak to him; then prophet-like  
They hail'd him father to a line of kings:  
Upon my head they placed a fruitless crown  
And put a barren sceptre in my gripe,  
Thence to be wrench'd with an unlineal hand,  
No son of mine succeeding. If 't be so,  
For Banquo's issue have I filed my mind;

60

48 *But to be safely thus*] But to reign in safety is the essential thing.

49 *royalty of nature*] high nobility of character

51 *to that*] in addition to that.

53 *in safety*] cautiously.

55-56 *My Genius . . . Cæsar*] In *Ant. and Cleop.*, II, iii, 18-23, Shakespeare, adapting a passage in Plutarch's *Life of Mark Antony*, makes a soothsayer warn Antony that his demon, i e., genius or attendant spirit, is overpowered or checked when in the presence of Octavius Cæsar.

62 *wrench'd with*] wrenched by.

64 *filed*] defiled.

For them the gracious Duncan have I murder'd;  
 Put rancours in the vessel of my peace  
 Only for them, and mine eternal jewel  
 Given to the common enemy of man,  
 To make them kings, the seed of Banquo kings!  
 Rather than so, come, fate, into the list, 70  
 And champion me to the utterance! Who 's there?

*Re-enter Attendant, with two Murderers*

Now go to the door, and stay there till we call.  
 [Exit Attendant.]

Was it not yesterday we spoke together?

FIRST MUR. It was, so please your highness.

MACB. Well then, now

Have you consider'd of my speeches? Know  
 That it was he in the times past which held you  
 So under fortune, which you thought had been  
 Our innocent self: this I made good to you  
 In our last conference; pass'd in probation with you,

66 *rancours*] malignant sentiment.

*the vessel of my peace*] Cf. *Romans*, ix, 22-23, "the vessels of wrath . . .  
 the vessels of mercy."

67 *mine eternal jewel*] my immortal soul.

69 *seed*] Pope's correction of the Folio reading *seeds*.

71 *champion me to the utterance*] fight for me to the last extremity (à l'outrance).

72 (Stage Direction) *two Murderers*] These hired assassins are not professional murderers, but discharged soldiers, who cherish a grievance against Banquo. See lines 80-84, *infra*.

79 *pass'd in probation with you*] proved to you point by point.

How you were borne in hand, how cross'd, the instru-  
ments,

80

Who wrought with them, and all things else that might  
To half a soul and to a notion crazed

Say "Thus did Banquo."

FIRST MUR. You made it known to us.

MACB. I did so; and went further, which is now  
Our point of second meeting. Do you find  
Your patience so predominant in your nature,  
That you can let this go? Are you so gossell'd,  
To pray for this good man and for his issue,  
Whose heavy hand hath bow'd you to the grave  
And beggar'd yours for ever?

FIRST MUR. We are men, my liege. 90

MACB. Ay, in the catalogue ye go for men;  
As hounds and greyhounds, mongrels, spaniels,  
curs,

Shoughs, water-rugs and demi-wolves, are clept  
All by the name of dogs: the valued file  
Distinguishes the swift, the slow, the subtle,

80 *borne in hand*] deluded (by false hope) Cf *Hamlet*, II, ii, 67: "[He]  
Was falsely borne in hand."

*the instruments*] the tools or agents of oppression.

82 *a notion crazed*] a mad mind, an intellect having the smallest powers  
of ratiocination

87 *Are you so gossell'd*] Are you of that degree of piety which is pre-  
scribed by the gospel? Cf. *Matthew*, v, 44: "But I say unto you . . .  
pray for them which despitefully use you, and persecute you."

93 *Shoughs, water-rugs . . . clept*] Shaggy dogs, curly-haired water dogs,  
and dogs crossed by a wolf, are called or designed.

94 *the valued file*] the catalogue raisonnée, the schedule with the items set  
out according to value.



The housekeeper, the hunter, every one  
According to the gift which bounteous nature  
Hath in him closed, whereby he does receive  
Particular addition, from the bill

That writes them all alike: and so of men.

100

Now if you have a station in the file,  
Not i' the worst rank of manhood, say it,  
And I will put that business in your bosoms  
Whose execution takes your enemy off,  
Grapples you to the heart and love of us,  
Who wear our health but sickly in his life,  
Which in his death were perfect.

SEC. MUR. I am one, my liege,  
Whom the vile blows and buffets of the world  
Have so incensed that I am reckless what  
I do to spite the world.

FIRST MUR. And I another  
So weary with disasters, tugg'd with fortune,  
That I would set my life on any chance,  
To mend it or be rid on't.

110

MACB. Both of you '  
Know Banquo was your enemy.

BOTH MUR. True, my lord.

MACB. So is he mine, and in such bloody distance

98 *The housekeeper*] The house dog or watch dog

99-100 *Particular addition . . . all alike*] Special title or attribute, apart  
from the general list which enters all the items by the general title of  
"dog."

101 *a station in the file*] a definite place in the select catalogue

111 *tugg'd with fortune*] worried by fortune, as a rat is worried by a dog

115 *distance*] hostility, antagonism. Bacon, *Essays*, XV, speaks of  
"setting" men at "distance," i. e., at variance.

That every minute of his being thrusts  
 Against my near'st of life: and though I could  
 With barefaced power sweep him from my sight  
 And bid my will avouch it, yet I must not,  
 For certain friends that are both his and mine, 120  
 Whose loves I may not drop, but wail his fall  
 Who I myself struck down: and thence it is  
 That I to your assistance do make love,  
 Masking the business from the common eye  
 For sundry weighty reasons.

SEC. MUR. We shall, my lord,  
 Perform what you command us.

FIRST MUR. Though our lives —

MACB. Your spirits shine through you. Within this  
 hour at most

I will advise you where to plant yourselves,  
 Acquaint you with the perfect spy o' the time,  
 The moment on't; for 't must be done to-night, 130  
 And something from the palace; always thought  
 That I require a clearness: and with him —  
 To leave no rubs nor botches in the work —

117 *my near'st of life*] my most vital part.

119 *bid my will avouch it*] order my will to give final warrant for it, let my  
 mere will be the deed's complete justification.

120-122 *For certain friends . . . his fall Who I*] Because of certain friends  
 . . . I cannot but express grief for the fall of him whom I . . .

129 *the perfect spy o' the time*] the critical juncture when the deed must be  
 done A third man is to join the two murderers and give the signal  
 for the fatal blow.

131-132 *And something . . . clearness*] And at some distance from the pal-  
 ace; it being always kept in mind that I must stand clear of all suspicion.

133 *no rubs nor botches*] no obstacles nor clumsy blunders. "Rubs" was a

# MACBETH

## ACT III

Fleance his son, that keeps him company,  
Whose absence is no less material to me  
Than is his father's, must embrace the fate  
Of that dark hour. Resolve yourselves apart:  
I'll come to you anon.

BOTH MUR. We are resolved, my lord.

MACB. I'll call upon you straight: abide within.

[*Exeunt Murderers.*]

It is concluded: Banquo, thy soul's flight, 140  
If it find heaven, must find it out to-night. [*Exit.*]

### SCENE II — THE PALACE

*Enter* LADY MACBETH and a Servant

LADY M. Is Banquo gone from court?

SERV. Ay, madam, but returns again to-night.

LADY M. Say to the king, I would attend his leisure  
For a few words.

SERV. Madam, I will. [*Exit.*]

LADY M. Nought 's had, all 's spent,  
Where our desire is got without content:  
'T is safer to be that which we destroy  
Than by destruction dwell in doubtful joy.

technical term in the game of bowls, for any obstacle in the path of a throw.

137 *Resolve yourselves*] Steel or confirm your resolution.

3 *attend his leisure*] wait till he is at leisure.

*Enter MACBETH*

How now, my lord! why do you keep alone,  
 Of sorriest fancies your companions making;  
 Using those thoughts which should indeed have died 10  
 With them they think on? Things without all remedy  
 Should be without regard: what 's done is done.

MACB. We have scotch'd the snake, not kill'd it:  
 She'll close and be herself, whilst our poor malice  
 Remains in danger of her former tooth.  
 But let the frame of things disjoint, both the worlds  
 suffer,

Ere we will eat our meal in fear, and sleep  
 In the affliction of these terrible dreams  
 That shake us nightly: better be with the dead,  
 Whom we, to gain our peace, have sent to peace, 20  
 Than on the torture of the mind to lie  
 In restless ecstasy. Duncan is in his grave;

10 *Using*] Cherishing.

11-12 *Things . . . regard*] Cf. *Wint. Tale*, III, ii, 219-220: "What 's gone and what 's past help Should be past grief," and note.

13 *scotch'd*] wounded, mutilated, slashed Cf. *Cor.*, IV, v, 186-187 "he scotched him and notched him like a carbonado" *Scotch'd* is Theobald's universally adopted emendation of the Folio reading *scorch'd*.

16-17 *let the frame . . . Ere we will*] let the universe dissolve, let both the terrestrial and celestial worlds suffer before we resign ourselves to.

20 *our peace*] Thus the First Folio. The later Folios substitute *our place*. Macbeth is thinking of the peace that ought to come of realised ambition. The repetition of the word "peace" is in Shakespeare's manner.

21 *on the torture*] on the rack.

22 *ecstasy*] frenzy.

# MACBETH

## ACT III

After life's fitful fever he sleeps well;  
Treason has done his worst: nor steel, nor poison,  
Malice domestic, foreign levy, nothing,  
Can touch him further.

LADY M. Come on;  
Gentle my lord, sleek o'er your rugged looks;  
Be bright and jovial among your guests to-night.

MACB. So shall I, love; and so, I pray, be you:  
Let your remembrance apply to Banquo;  
Present him eminence, both with eye and tongue:  
Unsafe the while, that we  
Must lave our honours in these flattering streams,  
And make our faces visards to our hearts,  
Disguising what they are.

30

LADY M. You must leave this.

MACB. O, full of scorpions is my mind, dear wife!  
Thou know'st that Banquo, and his Fleance, lives.

LADY M. But in them nature's copy 's not eterne.

27 *sleek o'er*] smooth over.

30 *Let your remembrance . . . Banquo*] Remember that you treat Banquo especially in the "bright and jovial" way you suggest. Lady Macbeth knows nothing of her husband's murderous designs.

31 *Present him eminence*] Pay him the highest honours.

32-35 *Unsafe the while . . . they are*] The passage is difficult and the short line 32 ("unsafe . . . we") suggests that something is lost. The meaning seems to be that we are insecure on our thrones, so long as we have to employ the flattering art of dissimulation to protect our position, and to make our faces wear hypocritical expressions which conceal the feelings of our hearts. "Visards" is often used for "masks."

38 *nature's copy 's not eterne*] the tenure by which life is held of nature is not perpetual "Copy" means "copyhold tenure," "lease."

MACB. There 's comfort yet; they are assailable;  
 Then be thou jocund: ere the bat hath flown 40  
 His cloister'd flight; ere to black Hecate's summons  
 The shard-borne beetle with his drowsy hums  
 Hath rung night's yawning peal, there shall be done  
 A deed of dreadful note.

LADY M. What 's to be done?

MACB. Be innocent of the knowledge, dearest chuck,  
 Till thou applaud the deed. Come, seeling night,  
 Scarf up the tender eye of pitiful day,  
 And with thy bloody and invisible hand  
 Cancel and tear to pieces that great bond  
 Which keeps me pale! Light thickens, and the crow 50  
 Makes wing to the rooky wood:

40-41 *the bat . . . cloister'd flight*] the bat is often seen wheeling in flight about the roof of cloisters or cloistered passages.

41 *to black Hecate's summons*] in obedience to the summons of dark night Hecate in classical mythology was primarily the name that Diana bore in her capacity of goddess of the moon; it was thence transferred to the queen of the infernal regions, the patroness of witches, and the queen of night. Here Hecate is merely employed as a personification of the night. Cf. II, i, 52, *supra*, and III, v, 1 *seq.*, *infra*.

42 *shard-borne*] borne on its shards or scaly wings. Cf. *Cymb.*, III, iii, 20: "The *sharded* beetle." Strictly, "shard" is the case in which the beetle keeps his wings when not in use.

43 *yawning peal*] call to sleep.

44 *note*] meaning, significance.

46 *seeling*] a technical term in falconry for sewing up the eyes of hawks to make them tractable.

49 *Cancel . . . bond*] Legal phraseology. Cf. *Rich.* III, IV, iv, 77: "Cancel his bond of life." Here "that great bond" is Banquo's life

50 *thickens*] grows dull.

51 *rooky*] murky, misty. The word is still so used in provincial dialect.

# MACBETH

## ACT III

Good things of day begin to droop and drowse,  
 Whiles night's black agents to their preys do rouse.  
 Thou marvell'st at my words: but hold thee still;  
*Things bad begun make strong themselves by ill:*  
 So, prithee, go with me. *[Exeunt.]*

### SCENE III — A PARK NEAR THE PALACE

*Enter three Murderers*

FIRST MUR. But who did bid thee join with us?

THIRD MUR. Macbeth.

SEC. MUR. He needs not our mistrust; since he  
 delivers

Our offices, and what we have to do,  
 To the direction just.

FIRST MUR. Then stand with us.  
 The west yet glimmers with some streaks of day:  
 Now spurs the lated traveller apace

53 *night's black agents*] thieves, robbers, and all noxious things which  
 work by night

2 *He needs not our mistrust*] There is no need to mistrust him. Some commentators maintain that the third murderer is Macbeth himself, and that the lines of this speech fitly explain Macbeth's promise (III, i, 128-130, *supra*) to give the murderers subsequently precise directions in regard to the commission of the crime. A chief objection to this theory lies in the third murderer's plain intimation that he witnesses Fleance's escape (line 20), and in Macbeth's quite obviously sincere surprise (III, iv, 17 *seq.*, *infra*) at learning of that fact from the first and second murderers.

6 *lated*] belated.

## SCENE III

## MACBETH

To gain the timely inn, and near approaches  
The subject of our watch.

THIRD MUR. Hark! I hear horses.

BAN. *[Within]* Give us a light there, ho!

SEC. MUR. *Then 't is he: the rest*  
*That are within the note of expectation* 10  
Already are i' the court.

FIRST MUR. His horses go about.

THIRD MUR. Almost a mile: but he does usually —  
So all men do — from hence to the palace gate  
Make it their walk.

SEC. MUR. A light, a light!

*Enter BANQUO, and FLEANCE with a torch*

THIRD MUR. 'T is he.

FIRST MUR. Stand to 't.

BAN. It will be rain to-night.

FIRST MUR. Let it come down.

*[They set upon Banquo.]*

BAN. O, treachery! Fly, good Fleance, fly, fly, fly!  
Thou mayst revenge. O slave! *[Dies. Fleance escapes.]*

THIRD MUR. Who did strike out the light?

FIRST MUR. Was 't not the way?

THIRD MUR. There 's but one down; the son is fled.

SEC. MUR. We have lost

Best half of our affair. 21

FIRST MUR. Well, let 's away and say how much is  
done. *[Exeunt.]*

10 *within the note of expectation*] on the list of expected guests

19 *Was 't not the way?*] Was it not the best means of evading discovery?



# MACBETH

## ACT III

### SCENE IV — HALL IN THE PALACE

*A banquet prepared. Enter MACBETH, LADY MACBETH, ROSS, LENNOX, Lords, and Attendants*

MACB. You know your own degrees; sit down: at first

And last the hearty welcome.

LORDS. Thanks to your majesty.

MACB. Ourself will mingle with society  
And play the humble host.

Our hostess keeps her state, but in best time  
We will require her welcome.

LADY M. Pronounce it for me, sir, to all our friends,  
For my heart speaks they are welcome.

*Enter first Murderer to the door*

MACB. See, they encounter thee with their hearts'  
thanks.

Both sides are even: here I 'll sit i' the midst:  
Be large in mirth; anon we 'll drink a measure  
The table round. [*Approaching the door*] There 's blood  
upon thy face.

MUR. 'T is Banquo's then.

1 *degrees*] ranks of precedence.

5 *her state*] her chair of state, her throne.

6 *require her welcome*] ask or request her to give us welcome.

11 *large*] liberal, free.

MACB. 'T is better thee without than he within.  
Is he dispatch'd?

MUR. My lord, his throat is cut; that I did for him.

MACB. Thou art the best o' the cut-throats: yet he's  
good

That did the like for Fleance: if thou didst it,  
Thou art the nonpareil.

MUR. Most royal sir,  
Fleance is 'scaped.

20

MACB. [*Aside*] Then comes my fit again: I had else  
been perfect,

Whole as the marble, founded as the rock,  
As broad and general as the casing air:  
But now I am cabin'd, cribb'd, confined, bound in  
To saucy doubts and fears. — But Banquo's safe?

MUR. Ay, my good lord: safe in a ditch he bides,  
With twenty trenched gashes on his head;  
The least a death to nature.

MACB. 'Thanks for that.  
[*Aside*] There the grown serpent lies; the worm that's fled  
Hath nature that in time will venom breed, 30  
No teeth for the present. Get thee gone: to-morrow  
We'll hear ourselves again. [*Exit Murderer.*]

LADY M. My royal lord,

14 'T is better . . . within] 'T is better for Banquo's blood to be on thy  
face than in his veins. The grammar is faulty.

19 the nonpareil] the paragon, a man of unapproachable merit.

23 As broad . . . air] With scope as full and free as the ambient air.

24 cabin'd, cribb'd] kept in a cabin and a crib.

27 trenched] deeply carved. Cf. "intrenchant" V, viii, 9, *infra*.

32 ourselves again] an absolute clause; "when we have recovered."

# MACBETH

ACT III

You do not give the cheer: the feast is sold  
That is not often vouch'd, while 't is a-making,  
'T is given with welcome: to feed were best at home;  
From thence the sauce to meat is ceremony;  
Meeting were bare without it.

MACB. Sweet remembrancer!  
Now good digestion wait on appetite,  
And health on both!

LEN. May 't please your highness sit.

[*The Ghost of Banquo enters, and sits in Macbeth's place.*]

MACB. Here had we now our country's honour roof'd, 40  
Were the graced person of our Banquo present;  
Who may I rather challenge for unkindness  
Than pity for mischance!

ROSS. His absence, sir,  
Lays blame upon his promise. Please 't your highness  
To grace us with your royal company.

MACB. The table's full.

LEN. Here is a place reserved, sir.

MACB. Where?

LEN. Here, my good lord. What 'is 't that moves  
your highness?

---

33-35 *You do not give . . . welcome*] You do not offer welcome; the feast is like a dinner paid for at an inn, when the assurance of hospitality is not frequently made to the guest, while the entertainment is in progress.

36 *ceremony*] ceremonial courtesy.

40 (Stage Direction) *The Ghost of Banquo enters*] The ghost neither speaks nor is seen by anyone besides Macbeth. It is clearly an hallucination, and should not be materially presented on the stage.

*Here . . . roof'd*] All the nobility of the country would be assembled under our roof.

41 *graced*] gracious. Cf. *Lear*, I, iv, 245: "a graced palace."

MACB. Which of you have done this?

LORDS. What, my good lord?

MACB. Thou canst not say I did it: never shake  
Thy gory locks at me. 50

ROSS. Gentlemen, rise; his highness is not well.

LADY M. Sit, worthy friends: my lord is often thus,  
And hath been from his youth: pray you, keep seat;  
The fit is momentary; upon a thought  
He will again be well: if much you note him,  
You shall offend him and extend his passion:  
Feed, and regard him not. Are you a man?

MACB. Ay, and a bold one, that dare look on that  
Which might appal the devil.

LADY M. O proper stuff! 60  
This is the very painting of your fear:  
This is the air-drawn dagger which, you said,  
Led you to Duncan. O, these flaws and starts,  
Impostors to true fear, would well become  
A woman's story at a winter's fire,  
Authorized by her grandam. Shame itself!  
Why do you make such faces? When all 's done,  
You look but on a stool.

MACB. Prithce, see there! behold! look! lo! how  
say you?  
Why, what care I? If thou canst nod, speak too. 70  
If charnel-houses and our graves must send

55 upon a thought] as quick as thought, in a moment.

57 extend his passion] prolong his fit of suffering.

60 O proper stuff!] Stuff and nonsense!

63-64 these flaws . . . fear] these gusts and starts of emotion, mere impostors, counterfeits, when compared with real sense of fear.

# MACBETH

## ACT III

Those that we bury back, our monuments  
Shall be the maws of kites.

[*Exit Ghost.*]

LADY M. What, quite unmann'd in folly?

MACB. If I stand here, I saw him.

LADY M. Fie, for shame!

MACB. Blood hath been shed ere now, i' the olden  
time,

Ere humane statute purged the gentle weal;  
Ay, and since too, murders have been perform'd  
Too terrible for the ear: the time has been,  
That, when the brains were out, the man would die,  
And there an end; but now they rise again, 80  
With twenty mortal murders on their crowns,  
And push us from our stools: this is more strange  
Than such a murder is.

LADY M. My worthy lord,  
Your noble friends do lack you.

MACB. I do forget.  
Do not muse at me, my most worthy friends;  
I have a strange infirmity, which is nothing  
To those that know me. Come, love and health to all;  
Then I'll sit down. Give me some wine, fill full.  
I drink to the general joy o' the whole table,

73 *the maws of kites*] Kites and other carnivorous birds were supposed to absorb their prey into their stomachs without digesting it.

76 *Ere humane . . . gentle weal*] Ere civilised legislation purged the commonwealth of barbarism and made it gentle and urbane.

78 *the time has been*] The First Folio reads *the times has been* and the later Folios *the times have been*.

84 *lack you*] miss your attention.

85 *muse*] wonder, be amazed.

And to our dear friend Banquo, whom we miss; 90  
 Would he were here! to all and him we thirst,  
 And all to all.

, LORDS. Our duties, and the pledge.

*Re-enter Ghost*

MACB. Avaunt! and quit my sight! let the earth hide thee!

Thy bones are marrowless, thy blood is cold;  
 Thou hast no speculation in those eyes  
 Which thou dost glare with.

LADY M. Think of this, good peers,  
 But as a thing of custom: 't is no other;  
 Only it spoils the pleasure of the time.

MACB. What man dare, I dare: 100  
 Approach thou like the rugged Russian bear,  
 The arm'd rhinoceros, or the Hyrcan tiger;  
 Take any shape but that, and my firm nerves  
 Shall never tremble: or be alive again,  
 And dare me to the desert with thy sword;  
 If trembling I inhabit then, protest me

91-92 to all . . . to all] we crave to drink to all and to him, and to wish all good wishes to every one

95 *speculation*] faculty of vision

101 *The arm'd rhinoceros*] A reference to the animal's hard and impenetrable hide

*the Hyrcan tiger*] Cf. *3 Hen VI*, I, iv, 155: "tigers of Hyrcania," a wild region on the shores of the Caspian sea

105 *inhabit*] Thus the Folios The passage is difficult *Inhabit* and *inherit* have been suggested for *inhabit* without improving the text "Inhabit" seems to be used here intransitively in the sense of live, dwell, or stay. Cf. *Two Gent.*, IV, ii, 47: "Love . . . *inhabits* there," and

# MACBETH

ACT III

The baby of a girl. Hence, horrible shadow !  
Unreal mockery, hence ! [Exit Ghost.]

Why, so: being gone,  
I am a man again. Pray you, sit still.

LADY M. You have displaced the mirth, broke the  
good meeting,  
With most admired disorder.

MACB. Can such things be, 110  
And overcome us like a summer's cloud,  
Without our special wonder? You make me strange  
Even to the disposition that I owe,  
When now I think you can behold such sights,  
And keep the natural ruby of your cheeks,  
When mine is blanch'd with fear.

ROSS. What sights, my lord?

LADY M. I pray you, speak not; he grows worse and  
worse;  
Question enrages him: at once, good night:  
Stand not upon the order of your going,  
But go at once.

LEN. Good night; and better health 120  
Attend his majesty !

Milton's *Paradise Lost*, vii, 162: "Meanwhile inhabit lax, ye powers  
of heaven."

105-106 *protest . . . girl*] declare me to be a child's doll.

110 *most admired disorder*] disorder or disturbance provoking complete  
astonishment.

111-113 *And overcome us . . . owe*] And pass over us like a summer's  
cloud without exciting any special surprise. You make me a stran-  
ger to, you make me doubtful of, the courageous temperament that  
I think myself ordinarily to possess.

119 *Stand not . . . going*] Do not stop to leave in order of precedence.

LADY M. A kind good night to all !

[*Exeunt all but Macbeth and Lady M.*]

MACB. It will have blood: they say blood will have  
blood:

Stones have been known to move and trees to speak;  
Augures and understood relations have  
By maggot-pies and choughs and rooks brought forth  
The secret'st man of blood. What is the night?

LADY M. Almost at odds with morning, which is  
which.

MACB. How say'st thou, that Macduff denies his  
person  
At our great bidding?

LADY M. Did you send to him, sir?

MACB. I hear it by the way, but I will send: 130  
There's not a one of them but in his house  
I keep a servant fee'd. I will to-morrow,  
And betimes I will, to the weird sisters:  
More shall they speak, for now I am bent to know,  
By the worst means, the worst. For mine own good  
All causes shall give way: I am in blood  
Stepp'd in so far that, should I wade no more,

123 *Stones . . . move*] Doubtless the gravestones covering the corpses of murdered men.

124 *Augures . . . relations*] Auguries or prognostications of the secret relations or order of things as understood by professional soothsayers.

125 *maggot-pies and choughs*] magpies and jackdaws.

128 *How say'st thou, that*] What do you think of the fact that . . .

131 *not a one*] never a one.

132 *fee'd*] in my pay as a spy.

136 *causes*] considerations.



# MACBETH

## ACT III

Returning were as tedious as go o'er:  
 Strange things I have in head that will to hand,  
 Which must be acted ere they may be scann'd. 140

LADY M. You lack the season of all natures, sleep. . .

MACB. Come, we'll to sleep. My strange and self-  
 abuse

Is the initiate fear that wants hard use:

We are yet but young in deed. [Exeunt.

### SCENE V — A HEATH

*Thunder. Enter the three Witches, meeting HECATE*

FIRST WITCH. Why, how now, Hecate! you look  
 angrily.

HEC. Have I not reason, beldams as you are,  
 Saucy and over-bold? How did you dare  
 To trade and traffic with Macbeth  
 In riddles and affairs of death;  
 And I, the mistress of your charms,  
 The close contriver of all harms,  
 Was never call'd to bear my part,

138 *as go o'er*] as to go forward.

140 *scann'd*] scrutinised.

141 *the season*] the seasoning or preservative.

142-143 *My strange . . . hard use*] My strange self-deception or self-delusion (*and* is redundant) is the fear of a novice, which calls for, or will be cured by, stringent discipline and experience.

1 *Hecate*] the patroness of witches in classical mythology. See note on II, i, 52, and III, ii, 41, *supra*.

7 *close*] secret.

Or show the glory of our art?  
And, which is worse, all you have done 10  
Hath been but for a wayward son,  
Spiteful and wrathful; who, as others do,  
Loves for his own ends, not for you.  
But make amends now: get you gone,  
And at the pit of Acheron  
Meet me i' the morning: thither he  
Will come to know his destiny:  
Your vessels and your spells provide,  
Your charms and every thing beside.  
I am for the air; this night I'll spend 20  
Unto a dismal and a fatal end:  
Great business must be wrought ere noon:  
Upon the corner of the moon  
There hangs a vaporous drop profound:  
I'll catch it ere it come to ground:  
And that distill'd by magic sleights  
Shall raise such artificial sprites  
As by the strength of their illusion  
Shall draw him on to his confusion:  
He shall spurn fate, scorn death, and bear 30  
His hopes 'bove wisdom, grace and fear:

15 *the pit of Acheron*] See note on *Mids. N. Dr.*, III, ii, 357 Acheron, which is properly a river of Hades, here seems loosely applied to some tarn or fountain in a region inhabited by witches.

20 *for the air*] on the point of flying.

23-24 *Upon the corner . . . profound*] The moon was credited by classical authors with exuding a poisonous foam, which falling on certain plants endowed them with powers of enchantment. "Profound" means "possessed of deep or mysterious qualities."

# MACBETH

ACT III

And you all know security  
Is mortals' chiefest enemy.

[*Music and a song within: "Come away, come away," etc.*

Hark! I am call'd; my little spirit, see,

Sits in a foggy cloud, and stays for me.

[*Exit.*

FIRST WITCH. Come, let's make haste; she'll soon  
be back again.

[*Exeunt.*

## SCENE VI — FORRES

### THE PALACE

*Enter LENNOX and another Lord*

LEN. My former speeches have but hit your thoughts,  
Which can interpret farther: only I say  
Things have been strangely borne. The gracious  
Duncan

Was pitied of Macbeth: marry, he was dead;  
And the right-valiant Banquo walk'd too late;  
Whom, you may say, if 't please you, Fleance kill'd,  
For Fleance fled: men must not walk too late.

32 *security*] over-confidence, carelessness

33 (Stage Direction) *Music . . . Come away, come away*] Capell's substitution for the twofold stage direction of the Folios: "*Musicke, and a Song,*" and "*Sing within Come away, come away, etc.,*" that follows two lines below. In Middleton's *Witch*, III, iii, 39-58, Hecate joins in a song of some twenty lines beginning with the words "Come away, come away." The song was doubtless by Middleton, and was interpolated in an early acting version of *Macbeth*.

SCENE VI (Stage Direction) *Enter LENNOX and another Lord*] Thus the Folios. It is difficult to understand why an anonymous lord is introduced. ANGUS or ROSS might well be substituted for "*another Lord.*"

Who cannot want the thought, how monstrous  
 It was for Malcolm and for Donalbain  
 To kill their gracious father? damned fact! 10  
 How it did grieve Macbeth! did he not straight,  
 In pious rage, the two delinquents tear,  
 That were the slaves of drink and thralls of sleep?  
 Was not that nobly done? Ay, and wisely too;  
 For 't would have anger'd any heart alive  
 To hear the men deny 't. So that, I say,  
 He has borne all things well: and I do think  
 That, had he Duncan's sons under his key —  
 As, an 't, please heaven, he shall not — they should find  
 What 't were to kill a father; so should Fleance. 20  
 But, peace! for from broad words, and 'cause he fail'd  
 His presence at the tyrant's feast, I hear,  
 Macduff lives in disgrace: sir, can you tell  
 Where he bestows himself?

LORD. The son of Duncan,  
 From whom this tyrant holds the due of birth,  
 Lives in the English court, and is received  
 Of the most pious Edward with such grace  
 That the malevolence of fortune nothing  
 Takes from his high respect. Thither Macduff  
 Is gone to pray the holy king, upon his aid 30

8 *Who cannot want the thought*] Who cannot help thinking.

21 *from broad words*] owing to downright speech.

25 *holds the due of birth*] withholds the birthright, inheritance. Cf. *Rich.*

*III*, *III*, vii, 120 and 158.

30-31 *upon his aid . . . Siward*] to secure his assistance in rousing the Earl of Northumberland and his son the warlike Siward (to support Malcolm's cause).

# MACBETH

ACT III

To wake Northumberland and warlike Siward:  
*That by the help of these, with Him above*  
*To ratify the work, we may again*  
 Give to our tables meat, sleep to our nights,  
 Free from our feasts and banquets bloody knives,  
 Do faithful homage and receive free honours:  
 All which we pine for now: and this report  
 Hath so exasperate the king that he  
 Prepares for some attempt of war.

LEN. Sent he to Macduff?

LORD. He did: and with an absolute "Sir, not I," 40  
 The cloudy messenger turns me his back,  
 And hums, as who should say "You'll rue the time  
 That clogs me with this answer."

LEN. And that well might  
 Advise him to a caution, to hold what distance  
 His wisdom can provide. Some holy angel  
 Fly to the court of England and unfold  
 His message ere he come, that a swift blessing  
 May soon return to this our suffering country  
 Under a hand accursed!

LORD. I 'll send my prayers with him.

[*Exeunt.*]

36 *free honours*] honours enjoyed without risk of exciting jealousy.

38 *exasperate*] a common form of "exasperated"

*the king*] Macbeth. Hanmer's correction of the Folio reading *their king*.

41-42 *The cloudy messenger . . . say*] The frowning messenger turns his back and hums as if he were saying. "Me" in "turns me his back" is the ethic dative.

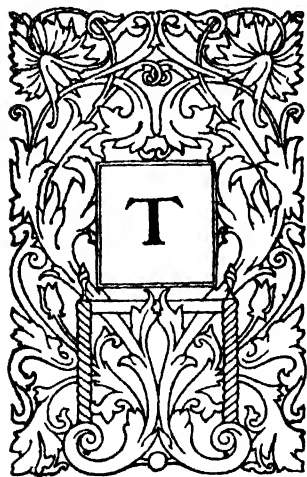
48-49 *our suffering country Under*] our country suffering under. Such transposition is no uncommon construction.



ACT FOURTH — SCENE I — A CAVERN  
IN THE MIDDLE, A BOILING CAULDRON

*Thunder. Enter the three Witches*

FIRST WITCH



THRICE THE BRINDED  
cat hath mew'd.

SEC. WITCH. Thrice and once  
the hedge-pig whined.

THIRD WITCH. Harpier cries  
“‘Tis time, ’tis time.”

FIRST WITCH. Round about  
the cauldron go:  
In the poison'd entrails throw.  
Toad, that under cold stone  
Days and nights has thirty one  
Swelter'd venom sleeping got,  
Boil thou first i' the charmed pot.

ALL. Double, double toil and trouble; 10  
Fire burn and cauldron bubble.

1 *brinded*] brindled, striped.

SEC. WITCH. Fillet of a fenny snake,  
 In the cauldron boil and bake;  
 Eye of newt and toe of frog,  
 Wool of bat and tongue of dog,  
 Adder's fork and blind-worm's sting,  
 Lizard's leg and howlet's wing,  
 For a charm of powerful trouble,  
 Like a hell-broth boil and bubble.

ALL. Double, double toil and trouble;  
 Fire burn and cauldron bubble. 20

THIRD WITCH. Scale of dragon, tooth of wolf,  
 Witches' mummy, maw and gulf  
 Of the ravin'd salt-sea shark,  
 Root of hemlock digg'd i' the dark,  
 Liver of blaspheming Jew,  
 Gall of goat and slips of yew  
 Sliver'd in the moon's eclipse,

2 *Thrice and once*] Four times. The \*witches only used odd numbers in their incantations. Cf I, iii, 35-36, *supra*.

*hedge-pig*] hedge-hog.

3 *Harper*] the name of a familiar spirit, probably formed from "harpy."

8 *Swelter'd venom*] Poison exuded by the toad, and diffused over its body.

16 *fork*] forked tongue.

*blind-worm's sting*] Cf. *Tim. of Ath.*, IV, iii, 181: "eyeless venom'd worm."

17 *howlet*] the contemporary spelling of "owlet."

23 *mummy*] a thick liquid said to be exuded by Egyptian mummies, and widely used in medicine.

*gulf*] swallow, throat, gullet.

24 *ravin'd*] gluttonous, ravenous. Cf. II, iv, 28, *supra*: "*ravin up*."

28 *Sliver'd . . . eclipse*] Cut into slivers or slips, in the inauspicious season of the moon's eclipse.

Nose of Turk and Tartar's lips,  
 Finger of birth-strangled babe  
 Ditch-deliver'd by a drab,  
 Make the gruel thick and slab:  
 Add thereto a tiger's chaudron,  
 For the ingredients of our cauldron.

30

ALL. Double, double toil and trouble;  
 Fire burn and cauldron bubble.

SEC. WITCH. Cool it with a baboon's blood,  
 Then the charm is firm and good.

*Enter HECATE to the other three Witches*

HEC. O, well done! I commend your pains;  
 And every one shall share i' the gains:  
 And now about the cauldron sing,  
 Like elves and fairies in a ring,  
 Enchanting all that you put in.

40

*[Music and a song: "Black spirits," etc.*

*[Hecate retires.*

SEC. WITCH. By the pricking of my thumbs,  
 Something wicked this way comes:

Open, locks,  
 Whoever knocks!

32 *slab*] glutinous.

33 *chaudron*] entrails.

34 *ingredients*] Rowe's substitution for the Folio reading *ingredience*.

Cf. I, vii, 11, *supra*.

43 (Stage Direction) *Music and a song* "Black spirits," etc.] Thus the Folios. In Middleton's *Witch*, V, ii, 60-69, Hecate sings a song beginning "Black spirits and white, red spirits and grey" The song was doubtless by Middleton and interpolated in an early acting version of *Macbeth*. Cf. III, v, 33, *supra*, and note



# MACBETH

ACT IV

*Enter MACBETH*

MACB. How now, you secret, black, and midnight  
hags!

What is't you do?

ALL. A deed without a name.

MACB. I conjure you, by that which you profess, 50  
Howe'er you come to know it, answer me:

Though you untie the winds and let them fight

Against the churches; though the yesty waves

Confound and swallow navigation up;

Though bladed corn be lodged and trees blown down;

Though castles topple on their warders' heads;

Though palaces and pyramids do slope

Their heads to their foundations; though the treasure

Of nature's germins tumble all together,

Even till destruction sicken; answer me 60

To what I ask you.

FIRST WITCH. Speak.

SEC. WITCH. Demand.

53 *yeasty*] frothy, after the manner of yeast

55 *bladed corn be lodged*] corn in the blade, before it reach the ear, be  
beaten down by the wind. Cf. *2 Hen. VI*, III, ii, 176: "Like to the  
summer's corn by tempest lodged."

58-60 *though the treasure . . . sicken*] The sense is as in *Lear*, III, ii, 8:  
"Crack nature's moulds, all *germins* spill at once" The meaning  
seems to be that the seeds of matter in nature's treasury may come  
into conflict with one another, even till ruin grows weary of its work of  
destruction; all nature (in other words) may be threatened by chaos.  
Theobald first suggested *germins* (*i. e.*, •germens), in place of the  
*germaine* or *germain* of the Folios. Pope read *germains*, which he  
awkwardly interpreted "kindred elements or relatives."

THIRD WITCH.

We'll answer.

FIRST WITCH. Say, if thou 'dst rather hear it from  
our mouths,

Or from our masters?

MACB.

Call 'em, let me see 'em.

FIRST WITCH. Pour in sow's blood, that hath  
eatenHer nine farrow; grease that's sweaten  
From the murderer's gibbet throw  
Into the flame.

ALL.

Come, high or low;  
Thyself and office deftly show!*Thunder. First Apparition: an armed Head*

MACB. Tell me, thou unknown power, —

FIRST WITCH.

He knows thy thought:

Hear his speech, but say thou nought.

70

FIRST APP. Macbeth! Macbeth! Macbeth! beware  
Macduff;Beware the thane of Fife. Dismiss me: enough. [*Descends*]MACB. Whate'er thou art, for thy good caution  
thanks;

Thou hast harp'd my fear aright: but one word more, —

FIRST WITCH. He will not be commanded: here's  
another,

More potent than the first.

65 *Her nine farrow*] Her litter of nine.69 (Stage Direction) *an armed Head*] A symbolical representation of  
Macbeth's helmeted head cut off by Macduff. Cf Stage Direction,  
V, viii, 53, *infra*. •74 *harp'd*. . *aright*] guessed rightly, struck the right note, as of a harpist  
sounding the right string.

*Thunder. Second Apparition: a bloody Child*

SEC. APP. Macbeth! Macbeth! Macbeth!

MACB. Had I three ears, I'd hear thee.

SEC. APP. Be bloody, bold and resolute; laugh to  
scorn

The power of man, for none of woman born 80  
Shall harm Macbeth.

*[Descends.]*

MACB. Then live, Macduff: what need I fear of  
thee?

But yet I'll make assurance double sure,  
And take a bond of fate: thou shalt not live;  
That I may tell pale-hearted fear it lies,  
And sleep in spite of thunder.

*Thunder. Third Apparition: a Child crowned, with a tree in his  
hand*

What is this,  
That rises like the issue of a king,  
And wears upon his baby-brow the round  
And top of sovereignty?

77 (Stage Direction) *Second Apparition: a bloody Child*] A presentation  
of the infant Macduff who "was from his mother's womb Untimely  
ripp'd" Cf V, viii, 15-16, *infra*.

84 *take a bond of fate*] take a bond or pledge from fate.

86 (Stage Direction) *a Child . . hand*] Duncan's son Malcolm, who  
ordered his soldiers to cut down the boughs of Birnam wood on moving  
to attack Macbeth's castle of Dunsinane. Cf. V, iv, 4, *infra*.

88-89 *the round And top of sovereignty*] the circular band and the orna-  
ment surmounting the sovereign's crown.

ALL. Listen, but speak not to 't.

THIRD APP. Be lion-mettled, proud, and take no  
care

90

Who chafes, who frets, or where conspirers are:  
Macbeth shall never vanquish'd be until  
Great Birnam wood to high Dunsinane hill  
Shall come against him.

[Descends.]

MACB. That will never be:  
Who can impress the forest, bid the tree  
Unfix his earth-bound root? Sweet bodements! good!  
Rebellion's head, rise never, till the wood  
Of Birnam rise, and our high-placed Macbeth  
Shall live the lease of nature, pay his breath  
To time and mortal custom. Yet my heart  
Throbs to know one thing: tell me, if your art  
Can tell so much: shall Banquo's issue ever  
Reign in this kingdom?

100

ALL. Seek to know no more.

MACB. I will be satisfied: deny me this,

93 *Dunsinane*] The second syllable is here accented, in accordance with local custom, the place being now spelt Dunsinan. Below, Shakespeare always accents the word wrongly on the first and third syllables.

95 *impress the forest*] press or enlist the forest into one's service

96 *Sweet bodements!*] Auspicious prophecies'

97 *Rebellion's head*] Hanmer's correction of the Folio reading *Rebellious* . *dead*, which, however, may be a quite intelligible reference to Banquo's death.

99-100 *Shall live . . . custom*] Shall live the full term of life, and then die a natural death in the ordinary way.

# MACBETH

## ACT IV

And an eternal curse fall on you! Let me know:  
Why sinks that cauldron? and what noise is this?

[*Hautboys.*

FIRST WITCH. Show!

SEC. WITCH. Show!

THIRD WITCH. Show!

ALL. Show his eyes, and grieve his heart; 110  
Come like shadows, so depart!

*A show of eight Kings, the last with a glass in his hand; Banquo's  
Ghost following*

MACB. Thou art too like the spirit of Banquo: .down!  
Thy crown does sear mine eye-balls. And thy hair,  
Thou other gold-bound brow, is like the first.  
A third is like the former. Filthy hags!  
Why do you show me this? A fourth! Start, eyes!

106 *what noise*] what music. The usage is not uncommon. Cf "a sound"  
(i. e., a musical accompaniment to a dance), line 129, *infra*.

112 (Stage Direction) *A show . . . following*] The Folios read *A show of  
eight kings, and Banquo last, with a glasse in his hand* But accord-  
ing to the succeeding text, the eighth king in the apparition bears the  
glass, and Banquo is mentioned after him The eight kings represent  
the issue of Banquo's son, Fleance, who was reckoned the ancestor  
of the Stuart dynasty The first Stuart King of Scotland was Robert II,  
who reigned from 1371 to 1390. He is reckoned to have descended  
from Fleance in the sixth or seventh generation Apparitions of him  
and his seven royal successors now pass before Macbeth's gaze, the  
eighth monarch being James VI of Scotland and James I of Eng-  
land. Kings alone are shown by the witches; King James's mother,  
Queen Mary Stuart, is omitted.

116 *Start, eyes!*] Macbeth bids his eyes start from their sockets, and  
destroy his power of vision.

What, will the line stretch out to the crack of doom?  
 Another yet! A seventh! I'll see no more:  
 And yet the eighth appears, who bears a glass  
 Which shows me many more; and some I see 120  
 'That two-fold balls and treble sceptres carry:  
 Horrible sight! Now I see 't is true;  
 For the blood-bolter'd Banquo smiles upon me,  
 And points at them for his. What, is this so?

FIRST WITCH. Ay, sir, all this is so: but why  
 Stands Macbeth thus amazedly?

Come, sisters, cheer we up his sprites,  
 And show the best of our delights:  
 I'll charm the air to give a sound,  
 While you perform your antic round, 130  
 That this great king may kindly say  
 Our duties did his welcome pay.

[*Music. The Witches dance, and then vanish, with Hecate.*]

MACB. Where are they? Gone? Let this pernicious  
 hour

Stand aye accursed in the calendar!  
 Come in, without there!

117 *crack of doom*] peal of thunder announcing the Last Judgment

119 *a glass*] a magic mirror or crystal, in which future events are made visible.

121 *two-fold balls and treble sceptres*] the insignia of King James, who, having submitted to the rite of double coronation at Scone and Westminster, was entitled to bear two balls or globes as emblems respectively of the kingdoms of England and Scotland, together with the sceptres of the three kingdoms of England, Scotland, and Ireland

123 *blood-bolter'd*] matted with blood. "Boltered" is still used in the midland counties of England of "clotted" or "matted" hair.

130 *antic round*] grotesque or fantastic dance.

*Enter LENNOX*

LEN. What 's your grace's will?

MACB. Saw you the weird sisters?

LEN. No, my lord.

MACB. Came they not by you?

LEN. No indeed, my lord.

MACB. Infected be the air whereon they ride,  
And damn'd all those that trust them! I did hear  
The galloping of horse: who was 't came by? 140

LEN. 'T is two or three, my lord, that bring you  
word

Macduff is fled to England.

MACB. Fled to England!

LEN. Ay, my good lord.

MACB. [*Aside*] Time, thou anticipatest my dread ex-  
ploits:

The flighty purpose never is o'ertook  
Unless the deed go with it: from this moment  
The very firstlings of my heart shall be  
The firstlings of my hand. And even now,  
To crown my thoughts with acts, be it thought and done:  
The castle of Macduff I will surprise; 150  
Seize upon Fife; give to the edge o' the sword  
His wife, his babes, and all unfortunate souls

144 *anticipatest*] preventest, removes the opportunity of.

145-146 *The flighty purpose . . . go with it*] Cf. *Meas. for Meas.*, V, i, 449:

"His act did not o'ertake his bad intent" "Flighty" means "swift,"  
"speedy," "immediate."

147 *The very firstlings of my heart*] The very first things that I think of.

SCENE II

MACBETH

That trace him in his line. No boasting like a fool;  
 This deed I'll do before this purpose cool:  
 But no more sights! — Where are these gentlemen?  
 Come, bring me where they are. [*Exeunt.*]

SCENE II — FIFE

MACDUFF'S CASTLE

*Enter* LADY MACDUFF, *her* Son, *and* ROSS

L. MACD. What had he done, to make him fly the  
 land?

ROSS. You must have patience, madam.

L. MACD. He had none:  
 His flight was madness: when our actions do not,  
 Our fears do make us traitors.

ROSS. You know not  
 Whether it was his wisdom or his fear.

L. MACD. Wisdom! to leave his wife, to leave his  
 babes,  
 His mansion and his titles, in a place  
 From whence himself does fly? He loves us not;  
 He wants the natural touch: for the poor wren,

153 *trace him*] follow him

155 *But no more sights!*] Macbeth has had enough of apparitions

3-4 *when our actions . . . traitors*] although our actions are not inspired  
 by treachery, our fears may prompt conduct to expose us to that  
 imputation

9 *the natural touch*] the sensibility of natural affection.

9-11 *the poor wren . . . owl*] Ornithologists point out that the ordinary wren



The most diminutive of birds, will fight, 10  
 Her young ones in her nest, against the owl.  
 All is the fear and nothing is the love;  
 As little is the wisdom, where the flight  
 So runs against all reason. . .

Ross. My dearest coz,  
 I pray you, school yourself: but, for your husband,  
 He is noble, wise, judicious, and best knows  
 The fits o' the season. I dare not speak much further:  
 But cruel are the times, when we are traitors  
 And do not know ourselves; when we hold rumour  
 From what we fear, yet know not what we fear, 20  
 But float upon a wild and violent sea  
 Each way and move. I take my leave of you:  
 Shall not be long but I'll be here again:  
 Things at the worst will cease, or else climb upward

is not the smallest of birds, though the golden crested wren has some claim to that designation The common blue-tit rather than the wren should, too, be credited with fighting birds of prey in defence of its young. It is only the barn-door owl which has been known to raid the nests of fledgelings.

17 *The fits o' the season*] The critical conditions, perilous turns, of the time.  
 19-22 *And do not know ourselves . . . move*] And do not know ourselves to be traitors, in fact do not know what we are or what we are doing; when we interpret rumour in the light of our fear, yet are not certain what we have to fear, but suffer our minds to be driven this way and that like a ship on a tempestuous sea. Ross is expanding Lady Macduff's words, lines 4-5, *supra*: "when our actions do not, Our fears do make us traitors." It is uncertain how "move" in line 22 should be construed. It is probably a substantive, standing for "movement" But it has been treated as a verb, implying violent agitation, and antithetically complementing "float."

To what they were before. My pretty cousin,  
Blessing upon you!

L. MACD. Father'd he is, and yet he 's fatherless.

ROSS. I am so much a fool, should I stay longer,  
It would be my disgrace and your discomfort:

I take my leave at once. [Exit.]

L. MACD. Sirrah, your father's dead: 30  
And what will you do now? How will you live?

SON. As birds do, mother.

L. MACD. What, with worms and flies?

SON. With what I get, I mean; and so do they.

L. MACD. Poor bird! thou 'ldst never fear the net  
nor lime,

The pitfall nor the gin.

SON. Why should I, mother? Poor birds they are  
not set for.

My father is not dead, for all your saying.

L. MACD. Yes, he is dead: how wilt thou do for a  
father?

SON. Nay, how will you do for a husband?

L. MACD. Why, I can buy me twenty at any market.

SON. Then you 'll buy 'em to sell again. 41

28-29 *I am so much . . . your discomfort*] Ross fears he will burst into unmanly tears.

30 *Sirrah*] not uncommonly used by parents to their children. The expression is sometimes found in Elizabethan literature addressed to women.

34 *lime*] birdlime; glutinous stuff used in the snaring of birds. Thus the First Folio. The later Folios read *lime*.

35 *gin*] trap.

36 *Poor birds . . . set for*] Traps are not set for poor and helpless (birds), but for the rich and powerful

# MACBETH

## ACT IV

L. MACD. Thou speak'st with all thy wit, and yet, i'  
 faith,  
 With wit enough for thee.  
 SON. Was my father a traitor, mother?  
 L. MACD. Ay, that he was.  
 SON. What is a traitor?  
 L. MACD. Why, one that swears and lies.  
 SON. And be all traitors that do so?  
 L. MACD. Every one that does so is a traitor, and  
 must be hanged. 50  
 SON. And must they all be hanged that swear and lie?  
 L. MACD. Every one.  
 SON. Who must hang them?  
 L. MACD. Why, the honest men.  
 SON. Then the liars and swearers are fools; for there  
 are liars and swearers enow to beat the honest men and  
 hang up them.  
 L. MACD. Now, God help thee, poor monkey! But  
 how wilt thou do for a father? 59  
 SON. If he were dead, you'd weep for him: if you  
 would not, it were a good sign that I should quickly  
 have a new father.  
 L. MACD. Poor prattler, how thou talk'st!

*Enter a Messenger*

MESS. Bless you, fair dame! I am not to you known,  
 Though in your state of honour I am perfect.

47 *swears and lies*] commits perjury.

58 *monkey*] "ape" is more commonly found as a playful term of  
 endearment.

65 *Though in your state . . . perfect*] Though I am perfectly acquainted  
 with your honourable rank.

I doubt some danger does approach you nearly:  
 If you will take a homely man's advice,  
 Be not found here; hence, with your little ones.  
 To fright you thus, methinks I am too savage;  
 •To do worse to you were fell cruelty, 70  
 Which is too nigh your person. Heaven preserve you!  
 I dare abide no longer. [Exit.]

L. MACD. Whither should I fly?  
 I have done no harm. But I remember now  
 I am in this earthly world, where to do harm  
 Is often laudable, to do good sometime  
 Accounted dangerous folly: why then, alas,  
 Do I put up that womanly defence,  
 To say I have done no harm? — What are these faces?

Enter Murderers

FIRST MUR. Where is your husband?

L. MACD. I hope, in no place so unsanctified 80  
 Where such as thou mayest find him.

FIRST MUR. He's a traitor.

SON. Thou liest, thou shag-ear'd villain!

FIRST MUR. What, you egg!  
 [Stabbing him.]

Young fry of treachery!

70 *To do worse to you . . . cruelty*] To do less than give you this note of warning were fierce cruelty.

82 *shag-ear'd*] Thus the Folios, for which most editors substitute *shag-haired*, a common epithet of abuse. "Shag-ear'd" probably means "with shaggy hair falling about the ears."

*egg*] Cf. *All's Well*, IV, iii, 233, where "egg" is used of a young girl.

## ACT IV

SON. He has kill'd me, mother:  
Run away, I pray you! *[Dies.*  
*[Exit Lady Macduff, crying "Murder!"*  
*Exeunt murderers, following her.*

## BEFORE THE KING'S PALACE

*Enter MALCOLM and MACDUFF*

MAL. Let us seek out some desolate shade, and there  
Weep our sad bosoms empty.

MACD. Let us rather  
Hold fast the mortal sword, and like good men  
Bestride our down-fall'n birthdom: each new morn  
New widows howl, new orphans cry, new sorrows  
Strike heaven on the face, that it resounds  
As if it felt with Scotland and yell'd out  
Like syllable of dolour.

MAL.                               What I believe; I'll wail;  
What know, believe; and what I can redress,  
As I shall find the time to friend, I will.                               10  
What you have spoke, it may be so perchance.  
This tyrant, whose sole name blisters our tongues,

4 *Bestride our down-fall'n birthdom*] Stand over and protect our ruined birthright. For the form "birthdom" of "kingdom" and "maſterdom" (I, v, 68, *supra*).

8 *Like syllable of dolour*] Responsive cry of grief.

10 to *friend*] friendly, favourable.

Was once thought honest: you have loved him well;  
 He hath not touch'd you yet. I am young; but some-  
 thing

You may deserve of him through me; and wisdom  
 To offer up a weak, poor, innocent lamb  
 To appease an angry god.

MACD. I am not treacherous.

MAL.

But Macbeth is.

A good and virtuous nature may recoil  
 In an imperial charge. But I shall crave your pardon;  
 That which you are, my thoughts cannot transpose: <sup>21</sup>  
 Angels are bright still, though the brightest fell:  
 Though 'all things foul would wear the brows of  
 grace,

Yet grace must still look so.

MACD. I have lost my hopes.

MAL. Perchance even there where I did find my  
 doubts.

15-17 *You may deserve . . . god*] The Folios read *discern*, for which Theobald substituted *deserve*. The meaning of the passage seems to be "You may secure his favour by sacrificing me; and it is worldly wisdom to sacrifice a helpless creature in order to appease the wrath of a powerful being."

19-20 *may recoil . . . charge*] may swerve from virtue under the stress of a commission from high quarters.

21 *transpose*] interpret.

23-24 *Though all things . . . look so*] Though villainy at times counterfeits the appearance of virtue, yet virtue always wears its own gracious aspect (which should not be lightly suspected).

25 *Perchance . . . doubts*] Malcolm explains that his suspicions, which disappoint and discourage Macduff, arise from the latter's abandonment of wife and children.

# MACBETH

## ACT IV

Why in that rawness left you wife and child,  
 Those precious motives, those strong knots of love,  
 Without leave-taking? I pray you,  
 Let not my jealousies be your dishonours,  
 But mine own safeties. You may be rightly just, ' 30  
 Whatever I shall think.

MACD. Bleed, bleed, poor country:  
 Great tyranny, lay thou thy basis sure,  
 For goodness dare not check thee: wear thou thy  
 wrongs;  
 The title is affeer'd. Fare thee well, lord:  
 I would not be the villain that thou think'st  
 For the whole space that 's in the tyrant's grasp  
 And the rich East to boot.

MAL. Be not offended:  
 I speak not as in absolute fear of you.  
 I think our country sinks beneath the yoke;  
 It weeps, it bleeds, and each new day a gash 40  
 Is added to her wounds: I think withal  
 There would be hands uplifted in my right;  
 And here from gracious England have I offer  
 Of goodly thousands: but for all this,  
 When I shall tread upon the tyrant's head,

26 *in that rawness*] in raw helplessness, without provision. Cf. *Hen. V*,  
 IV, i, 139: "their women *rawly* left"

27 *motives*] used of persons who excite affection.

29-30 *Let not . . . safeties*] Do not treat my suspicions as convicting you of  
 dishonourable acts, but as precautionary reflections prompted by the  
 calls of my own safety.

34 *The title 's affeer'd*] The usurper's title is affirmed or confirmed.  
 "Afee'r'd" is a technical term in law.

43 *gracious England*] Edward the Confessor, King of England.

Or wear it on my sword, yet my poor country  
 Shall have more vices than it had before,  
 More suffer and more sundry ways than ever,  
 By him that shall succeed.

MACD. What should he be?

MAL. It is myself I mean: in whom I know  
 All the particulars of vice so grafted  
 That, when they shall be open'd, black Macbeth  
 Will seem as pure as snow, and the poor state  
 Esteem him as a lamb, being compared  
 With my confineless harms.

50

MACD.. Not in the legions  
 Of horrid hell can come a devil more damn'd  
 In evils to top Macbeth.

MAL. I grant him bloody,  
 Luxurious, avaricious, false, deceitful,  
 Sudden, malicious, smacking of every sin  
 That has a name: but there's no bottom, none,  
 In my voluptuousness: your wives, your daughters,  
 Your matrons and your maids, could not fill up  
 The cistern of my lust, and my desire  
 All continent impediments would o'erbear,  
 That did oppose my will: better Macbeth  
 Than such an one to reign.

60

MACD. Boundless intemperance  
 In nature is a tyranny; it hath been

52 *open'd*] disclosed, discovered.

55 *confineless harms*] limitless sins.

58 *Luxurious*] Lustful, lecherous.

59 *Sudden*] Impetuous.

64 *continent*] restraining.



## ACT IV

70

80°

MACD. • This avarice

Cf. *M. Wives*, I, iii, 27: "*Convey*, the wise it call."

87 *The sword of our slain kings]* The means which has caused the slaughter of our kings.

[ 102 ]

Of your mere own: all these are portable,  
With other graces weigh'd.

90

MAL. But I have none: the king-becoming graces,  
As justice, verity, temperance, stableness,  
Bounty, perseverance, mercy, lowliness,  
Devotion, patience, courage, fortitude,  
I have no relish of them, but abound  
In the division of each several crime,  
Acting it many ways. Nay, had I power, I should  
Pour the sweet milk of concord into hell,  
Uproar the universal peace, confound  
All unity on earth.

MACD. O Scotland, Scotland!

100

MAL. If such a one be fit to govern, speak:  
I am as I have spoken.

MACD. Fit to govern!  
No, not to live. O nation miserable!  
With an untitled tyrant bloody-scepter'd,  
When shalt thou see thy wholesome days again,  
Since that the truest issue of thy throne  
By his own interdiction stands accursed,  
And does blaspheme his breed? Thy royal father

89-90 *all these are portable . . . weigh'd*] all these vices are tolerable, if  
they be counterbalanced by other virtues.

92 *temperance*] self-restraint.

95-97 *but abound . . . ways*] but divide every sin into any number of com-  
ponent parts, and commit every one of them separately

104 *bloody-scepter'd*] wielding the sceptre of a usurper, who has gained  
the throne by deeds of blood.

107 *interdiction*] condemnation.

108 *blaspheme*] slander.

# MACBETH

## ACT IV

Was a most sainted king: the queen that bore  
thee,

Oftener upon her knees than on her feet, 110

Died every day she lived. Fare thee well!

These evils thou repeat'st upon thyself

Have banish'd me from Scotland. O my breast,

Thy hope ends here!

MAL.

Macduff, this noble passion,

Child of integrity, hath from my soul

Wiped the black scruples, reconciled my thoughts

To thy good truth and honour. Devilish Macbeth

By many of these trains hath sought to win me

Into his power; and modest wisdom plucks me

From over-credulous haste: but God above 120

Deal between thee and me! for even now

I put myself to thy direction, and

Unspeak mine own detraction; here abjure

The taints and blames I laid upon myself,

For strangers to my nature. I am yet

Unknown to woman, never was forsworn,

Scarcely have coveted what was mine own,

At no time broke my faith, would not betray

The devil to his fellow, and delight

No less in truth than life: my first false speaking 130

Was this upon myself: what I am truly,

Is thine and my poor country's to command:

111 *Died every day she lived*] A reminiscence of 1 Cor., xv, 31: "I die daily."

118 *trains*] devices, plots, traps

120 *over-credulous haste*] over-hasty credulity.

Whither indeed, before thy here-approach,  
 Old Siward, with ten thousand warlike men,  
 Already at a point, was setting forth.  
 Now we 'll together, and the chance of goodness  
 Be like our warranted quarrel! Why are you silent?

MACD. Such welcome and unwelcome things at once  
 'T is hard to reconcile.

*Enter a Doctor*

MAL. Well, more anon. Comes the king forth, I pray  
 you? 140

DOCT. Ay, sir; there are a crew of wretched souls  
 That stay his cure: their malady convinces  
 The great assay of art; but at his touch,  
 Such sanctity hath heaven given his hand,  
 They presently amend.

MAL. I thank you, doctor. [*Exit Doctor.*]

MACD. What 's the disease he means?

MAL. 'T is call'd the evil:

133 *thy here-approach*] The First Folio reads *they here approach*, which is obviously wrong. Cf. line 148, *infra* "here-remain."

134 *Old Siward*] Son of Beörn, Earl of Northumberland. His daughter was Duncan's wife, he was therefore Malcolm's grandfather, though at V, ii, 2, *infra*, he is called Malcolm's uncle.

135 *at a point*] quite ready, equipped.

136-137 *and the chance . . . quarrel*] and may the chances of good success be as great as the good warrant or justice of our cause of quarrel

142-143 *their malady . . . art*] their sickness is too much for the greatest endeavour of the medical art.

145 *presently*] immediately.

146 *the evil*] the king's evil or scrofula was long supposed to be cured by the touch of a king's hand. Edward the Confessor was credited with

# MACBETH

## ACT IV

A most miraculous work in this good king;  
 Which often, since my here-remain in England,  
 I have seen him do. How he solicits heaven,  
 Himself best knows: but strangely-visited people, 150  
 All swoln and ulcerous, pitiful to the eye,  
 The mere despair of surgery, he cures,  
 Hanging a golden stamp about their necks,  
 Put on with holy prayers: and 't is spoken,  
 To the succeeding royalty he leaves  
 The healing benediction. With this strange virtue  
 He hath a heavenly gift of prophecy,  
 And sundry blessings hang about his throne  
 That speak him full of grace.

*Enter Ross*

MACD. See, who comes here?

MAL. My countryman; but yet I know him not. 160

MACD. My ever gentle cousin, welcome hither.

MAL. I know him now: good God, betimes remove  
 The means that makes us strangers!

ROSS. Sir, amen.

a rare power of healing this disease. The sovereigns of England practised this mode of relieving scrofula till the reign of Queen Anne.

148 *here-remain*] Cf. "thy here-approach" (line 133, *supra*).

149 *solicits*] prevails by force of entreating.

153 *a golden stamp*] Cf. *M. Wives*, III, iv, 16, "stamps in gold," i. e., coins. Each person touched for "the king's evil" received from the sovereign a gold coin.

154 *'t is spoken*] 't is said

160 *My countryman*] Malcolm recognises Ross by his Scottish dress.

MACD. Stands Scotland where it did?

ROSS. Alas, poor country!  
Almost afraid to know itself! It cannot  
Be call'd our mother, but our grave: where nothing,  
But who knows nothing, is once seen to smile;  
Where sighs and groans and shrieks that rend the air,  
Are made, not mark'd; where violent sorrow seems  
A modern ecstasy: the dead man's knell 170  
Is there scarce ask'd for who; and good men's lives  
Expire before the flowers in their caps,  
Dying or ere they sicken.

MACD. O, relation  
Too nice, and yet too true!

MAL. What's the newest grief?

ROSS. That of an hour's age doth hiss the speaker;  
Each minute teems a new one.

MACD. How does my wife?

ROSS. Why, well.

MACD. And all my children?

ROSS. Well too. 177

MACD. The tyrant has not batter'd at their peace?

168 *rend*] Rowe's substitution for the Folio *rent*, which is, however, a recognised form of "rend"

170 *A modern ecstasy*] A commonplace display of emotion.

173 *or ere*] before

173-174 *O, relation . . . Too nice*] A narrative too elaborate in detail.

175 *That of an hour's age . . . speaker*] The grief which is an hour old is out of date and stale, and would cause the speaker to be hissed off the stage.

177 *Well*] An equivocation. The word "well" was often used of the dead Cf. *Ant. and Cleop.*, II, v, 32-33. "we use To say, the dead are *well*."

ROSS. No; they were well at peace when I did leave  
'em.

MACD. Be not a niggard of your speech: how goes 't?

ROSS. When I came hither to transport the tidings,  
Which I have heavily borne, there ran a rumour  
Of many worthy fellows that were out;  
Which was to my belief witness'd the rather,  
For that I saw the tyrant's power a-foot:  
Now is the time of help; your eye in Scotland  
Would create soldiers, make our women fight,  
To doff their dire distresses.

MAL. Be 't their comfort  
We are coming thither: gracious England hath  
Lent us good Siward and ten thousand men;  
An older and a better soldier none  
That Christendom gives out.

140

ROSS. Would I could answer  
This comfort with the like! But I have words  
That would be howl'd out in the desert air,  
Where hearing should not latch them.

MACD. What concern they?  
The general cause? or is it a fee-grief  
Due to some single breast?

183 *out*] in insurrection, in arms.

184 *was to my belief . . . rather*] attested to my mind the sooner.

188 *doff*] put off, divest themselves of.

192 *gives out*] announces, proclaims.

195 *latch*] catch, seize. Cf. *Sonnet* cxiii, 6, and note on *Tw. Night*, III,  
iii, 36.

196 *a fee-grief*] a private individual grief, a grief in single ownership. Cf.  
*Troil. and Cress.*, III, ii, 48: "a kiss in *fee-farm*."

ROSS. No mind that 's honest  
But in it shares some woe, though the main part  
Pertains to you alone.

MACD. If it be mine,  
Keep it not from me, quickly let me have it. 200

ROSS. Let not your ears despise my tongue for  
ever,  
Which shall possess them with the heaviest sound  
That ever yet they heard.

MACD. Hum! I guess at it.

ROSS. Your castle is surprised; your wife and babes  
Savagely slaughter'd: to relate the manner,  
Were, on the quarry of these murder'd deer,  
To add the death of you.

MAL. Merciful heaven!  
What, man! ne'er pull your hat upon your brows;  
Give sorrow words: the grief that does not speak  
Whispers the o'er-fraught heart, and bids it break. 210

MACD. My children too?

ROSS. Wife, children, servants, all  
That could be found.

MACD. And I must be from thence!  
My wife kill'd too?

ROSS. I have said.

MAL. Be comforted:  
Let 's make us medicines of our great revenge,  
To cure this deadly grief.

206 *quarry*] heap of slaughtered game.

209-210 *the grief . . . break*] a variant of Seneca's proverbial maxim  
(*Hippolytus* 615) "Curæ leves loquuntur, ingentes stupent" (Light  
cares speak, mighty ones are dumb).



# MACBETH

## ACT IV

MACD. He has no children. All my pretty ones?  
Did you say all? O hell-kite! All?  
What, all my pretty chickens and their dam  
At one fell swoop?

MAL. Dispute it like a man.

MACD. I shall do so; 220

But I must also feel it as a man:  
I cannot but remember such things were,  
That were most precious to me. Did heaven look on,  
And would not take their part? Sinful Macduff,  
They were all struck for thee! naught that I am,  
Not for their own demerits, but for mine,  
Fell slaughter on their souls: heaven rest them now!

MAL. Be this the whetstone of your sword: let grief  
Convert to anger; blunt not the heart, enrage it.

MACD. O, I could play the woman with mine  
eyes, 230

And braggart with my tongue! But, gentle heavens,  
Cut short all intermission; front to front  
Bring thou this fiend of Scotland and myself;  
Within my sword's length set him; if he 'scape,  
Heaven forgive him too!

216 *He has no children*] Cf Constance's remark to the legate Pandulph  
in *K. John*, III, iv, 91: "He talks to me that never had a son." Mac-  
duff's words seem, from the context, to relate to Malcolm here rather  
than to Macbeth, though more dramatic point would be given them  
if they could be applied to Macbeth.

218 *dam*] the word was not uncommonly applied to hens by Elizabethan  
writers

220 *Dispute it*] Contend with your grief.

232 *all intermission*] all delay or pause.

# MACBETH

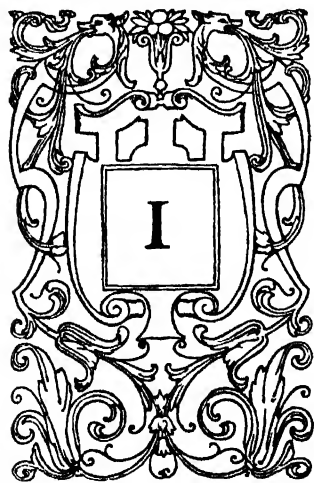
239 *Put on*] Instigate, incite.



ACT FIFTH — SCENE I — DUNSINANE  
 ANTE-ROOM IN THE CASTLE

*Enter a Doctor of Physic and a Waiting-Gentlewoman*

DOCTOR



HAVE TWO NIGHTS  
 watched with you, but can per-  
 ceive no truth in your report.  
 When was it she last walked?

GENT. Since his majesty went  
 into the field, I have seen her  
 rise from her bed, throw her  
 nightgown upon her, unlock her  
 closet, take forth paper, fold it,  
 write upon't, read it, afterwards  
 seal it, and again return to bed;  
 yet all this while in a most fast  
 sleep.

DOCT. A great perturbation in nature, to receive at  
 once the benefit of sleep and do the effects of watching!

<sup>4</sup> *Since his majesty . . . field*] Macbeth would seem to have taken com-  
 mand of a force in the field against his rebellious subjects (cf. IV,  
 iii, 185, *supra*), before he shut himself up in Dunsinane Castle.

In this slumb'ry agitation, besides her walking and other actual performances, what, at any time, have you heard her say? 13

GENT. That, sir, which I will not report after her.

DOCT. You may to me, and 't is most meet you should.

GENT. Neither to you nor any one, having no witness to confirm my speech.

*Enter LADY MACBETH, with a taper*

Lo you, here she comes! This is her very guise, and, upon my life, fast asleep. Observe her; stand close.

DOCT. How came she by that light? 20

GENT. Why, it stood by her: she has light by her continually; 't is her command.

DOCT. You see, her eyes are open.

GENT. Ay, but their sense is shut.

DOCT. What is it she does now? Look, how she rubs her hands.

GENT. It is an accustomed action with her, to seem thus washing her hands: I have known her continue in this a quarter of an hour.

LADY M. Yet here 's a spot. 30

DOCT. Hark! she speaks: I will set down what comes from her, to satisfy my remembrance the more strongly.

5 *nightgown*] dressing-gown. Cf. II, ii, 70, *supra*.

10 *watching*] wakefulness.

12 *actual performances*] activities.

19 *stand close*] conceal yourself

24 *sense is*] Rowe's emendation of the Folio reading *sense are*. "Corpse" is similarly treated as a plural in *1 Hen. IV*, I, i, 43.

LADY M. Out, damned spot! out, I say! One: two: why, then 't is time to do't. Hell is murky. Fie, my lord, fie! a soldier, and afeard? What need we fear who knows it, when none can call our power to account? Yet who would have thought the old man to have had so much blood in him?

DOCT. Do you mark that?

39

LADY M. The thane of Fife had a wife; where is she now? What, will these hands ne'er be clean? No more o' that, my lord, no more o' that: you mar all with this starting.

DOCT. Go to, go to; you have known what you should not.

GENT. She has spoke what she should not, I am sure of that: heaven knows what she has known.

LADY M. Here's the smell of the blood still: all the perfumes of Arabia will not sweeten this little hand. Oh, oh, oh!

50

DOCT. What a sigh is there! The heart is sorely charged.

GENT. I would not have such a heart in my bosom for the dignity of the whole body.

DOCT. Well, well, well, —

GENT. Pray God it be, sir.

DOCT. This disease is beyond my practice: yet I have

---

34 *Hell is murky*] Lady Macbeth expresses involuntary remorse for her crime, and dread of the eternal punishment which it invites.

42-43 *you mar . . . starting*] Lady Macbeth is recalling Macbeth's terror in the banquet scene.

54 *for the dignity . . . body*] even to clothe myself completely in the royal robe.

known those which have walked in their sleep who have died holily in their beds.

59

LADY M. Wash your hands; put on your nightgown; look not so pale: I tell you yet again, Banquo 's buried; 'he cannot come out on 's grave.

DOCT. Even so?

LADY M. To bed, to bed; there 's knocking at the gate: come, come, come, come, give me your hand: what 's done cannot be undone: to bed, to bed, to bed.

[*Exit.*

DOCT. Will she go now to bed?

GENT. Directly.

DOCT. Foul whisperings are abroad: unnatural deeds  
Do breed unnatural troubles: infected minds  
To their deaf pillows will discharge their secrets:  
More needs she the divine than the physician.  
God, God forgive us all! Look after her;  
Remove from her the means of all annoyance,  
And still keep eyes upon her. So good night:  
My mind she has mated and amazed my sight:  
I think, but dare not speak.

70

GENT. Good night, good doctor.

[*Exeunt.*

---

62 *on 's grave*] of his grave.

63 *Even so?*] The doctor detects the causes of Lady Macbeth's perturbation.

64-65 *there 's knocking at the gate*] Lady Macbeth recalls the knocking at the gate after Duncan's murder.

74 *annoyance*] violent injury.

76 *mated*] astounded, dismayed.

## SCENE II — THE COUNTRY NEAR DUNSINANE

*Drum and colours. Enter MENTEITH, CAITHNESS, ANGUS,  
LENNOX, and Soldiers*

MENT. The English power is near, led on by Malcolm,  
His uncle Siward and the good Macduff:  
Revenge burns in them; for their dear causes  
Would to the bleeding and the grim alarm  
Excite the mortified man.

ANG. Near Birnam wood<sup>7</sup>  
Shall we well meet them; that way are they coming.

CAITH. Who knows if Donalbain be with his brother?

LEN. For certain, sir, he is not: I have a file  
Of all the gentry: there is Siward's son,  
And many unrourh youths, that even now 10  
Protest their first of manhood.

2 *uncle*] rightly "grandfather." See note on IV, iij, 134, *supra*.

3-5 *for their dear causes . . . man*] for their desperate wrongs (or desperate calls to vengeance), would impel the man stricken to death to respond to the warlike signal for carnage and horror. The language is strained "The bleeding" is probably a substantive, standing for "the carnage of war," and paralleling "the grim alarm (of war)." "Mortified," though sometimes meaning "ascetic," apparently means here much the same as "dead."

8 *file*] list, catalogue, roll.

10 *unrourh*] smooth-chinned, beardless. Cf. *Tempest*, II, i, 249-250: "till newborn chins Be *rough* and razorable."

11 *Protest their first of manhood*] Make their earliest proof of manliness or manly courage.

MENT.

What does the tyrant?

CAITH. Great Dunsinane he strongly fortifies:  
Some say he 's mad; others, that lesser hate him,  
Do call it valiant fury: but, for certain,  
He cannot buckle his distemper'd cause  
Within the belt of rule.

ANG.

Now does he feel  
His secret murders sticking on his hands;  
Now minutely revolts upbraid his faith-breach;  
Those he commands move only in command,  
Nothing in love: now does he feel his title  
Hang loose about him, like a giant's robe  
Upon a dwarfish thief.

20

MENT.

Who then shall blame  
His pester'd senses to recoil and start,  
When all that is within him does condemn  
Itself for being there?

CAITH.

Well, march we on,  
To give obedience where't is truly owed:  
Meet we the medicine of the sickly weal,  
And with him pour we, in our country's purge,  
Each drop of us.

15 *his distemper'd cause*] the party or body of men supporting his tainted cause.

18 *minutely*] every instant.

23 *pester'd*] harassed, hampered, embarrassed

24-25 *When all . . . there?*] When all the faculties of his mind are involved in self-condemnation

27-28 *the medicine . . . with him*] "Medicine" here stands for the "doctor of medicine" the physician, like the French "médecin."



## ACT V

LEN. Or so much as it needs  
To dew the sovereign flower and drown the weeds. 50  
Make we our march towards Birnam. [*Exeunt, marching.*]

## A ROOM IN THE CASTLE

MACB. Bring me no more reports; let them fly all:  
Till Birnam wood remove to Dunsinane  
I cannot taint with fear. What's the boy Malcolm?  
Was he not born of woman? The spirits that know  
All mortal consequences have pronounced me thus:  
“Fear not, Macbeth; no man that's born of woman  
Shall e'er have power upon thee.” Then fly, false  
          thanes,  
And mingle with the English epicures:  
The mind I sway by and the heart I bear  
Shall never sag with doubt nor shake with fear.

10

The devil damn thee black, thou cream-faced loon!  
Where got'st thou that goose look?

11 *cream-faced*] Cf. line 17, *infra*: *whey-face*.

SERV. There is ten thousand —

MACB. Geese, villain?

SERV. Soldiers, sir.

MACB. Go prick thy face and over-red thy fear,  
Thou lily-liver'd boy. What soldiers, patch?  
Death of thy soul! those linen cheeks of thine  
Are counsellors to fear. What soldiers, whey-face?

SERV. The English force, so please you.

MACB. Take thy face hence. [Exit Servant.]

Seyton! — I am sick at heart,  
When I behold — Seyton, I say! — This push 20  
Will cheer me ever, or disseat me now.  
I have lived long enough: my way of life  
Is fall'n into the sear, the yellow leaf,

15 *patch*] fool; often used of incompetent household servants. Cf. *Merch. of Ven.*, II, v, 45: "The *patch* is kind enough."

20 *push*] dangerous emergency or crisis. Cf. *Wint. Tale*, V, iii, 129: "upon this *push*."

21 *cheer . . . disseat*] Steevens read *disseat*, *i. e.*, "unseat" for the First Folio reading *diseate* and the later Folios, *disease*. All the Folios read *cheer*, but many editors who retain *disseat* have adopted *chair* for *cheer* as an intelligible antithesis. But Shakespeare nowhere uses "chair" as a verb, and it is doubtful if it could signify, as the present context would require, "keep enthroned". Probably the passage means that this dangerous crisis will either give me permanent comfort in security or overthrow me altogether. Cf. the common explanation "good cheer!" *i. e.*, take courage, be of good comfort.

22 *my way of life*] Thus the Folios. Cf. *Pericles*, I, i, 54, "ready for the *way of life* or death.", Johnson's conjecture, *my May of life*, which Steevens supported, is unnecessary.

23 *sear*] withered: often used of autumn leaves.

And that which should accompany old age,  
As honour, love, obedience, troops of friends,  
I must not look to have; but, in their stead,  
Curses, not loud but deep, mouth-honour, breath,  
Which the poor heart would fain deny, and dare not.  
Seyton!

*Enter SEYTON*

SEY. What 's your gracious pleasure?

MACB. What news more? 30

SEY. All is confirm'd, my lord, which was reported.

MACB. I 'll fight, till from my bones my flesh be  
hack'd.

Give me my armour.

SEY. 'T is not needed yet.

MACB. I 'll put it on.

Send out moe horses, skirr the country round;  
Hang those that talk of fear. Give me mine armour.  
How does your patient, doctor?

DOCT. Not so sick, my lord,  
As she is troubled with thick-coming fancies,  
That keep her from her rest.

MACB. Cure her of that.  
Canst thou not minister to a mind diseased, 40

27 *mouth-honour, breath*] Cf. *Merch. of Ven.*, V, i, 141: "breathing courtesy."

35 *skirr*] scour. Cf. line 56, *infra*

39 *Cure her*] Thus the Second and later Folios. The First Folio omits *her*.

40-45 *Canst thou not . . . heart?*] Cf. Spenser's *Amoretti* (1595), Sonnet 1,

# MACBETH

**DOCT.**                      Therein the patient  
Must minister to himself.

[ 121 ]

Would scour these English hence? Hear'st thou of  
them?

DOCT. Ay, my good lord; your royal preparation  
Makes us hear something.

MACB. Bring it after me.  
I will not be afraid of death and bane  
Till Birnam forest come to Dunsinane.

60

DOCT. [*Aside*] Were I from Dunsinane away and clear,  
Profit again should hardly draw me here. [*Exeunt.*]

SCENE IV — COUNTRY NEAR BIRNAM WOOD

*Drum and colours. Enter MALCOLM, old SIWARD and his Son,  
MACDUFF, MENTEITH, CAITHNESS, ANGUS, LENNOX, ROSS,  
and Soldiers, marching*

MAL. Cousins, I hope the days are near at hand  
That chambers will be safe. •

MENT. We doubt it nothing.

SIW. What wood is this before us? •

MENT. The wood of Birnam.

MAL. Let every soldier hew him down a bough,  
And bear 't before him: thereby shall we shadow

and Third, *Caeny*. The drug was often called "sene" by Elizabethan  
writers, and was spelt in many other ways. "Cyme" of the First  
Folio is possibly a misprint for *Cynne* or *Synne*.

58 *Bring it after me*] another reference to the piece of armour, which Mac-  
beth just ordered to be removed (cf. line 54, *supra*).

2 *chambers will be safe*] one's house will be free of Macbeth's spies. Cf.  
III, iv, 131, *supra*.

The numbers of our host, and make discovery  
Err in report of us.

SOLDIERS. It shall be done.

SIW. We learn no other but the confident tyrant  
Keeps still in Dunsinane, and will endure  
Our setting down before 't.

MAL. 'T is his main hope: 10  
For where there is advantage to be given,  
Both more and less have given him the revolt,  
And none serve with him but constrained things  
Whose hearts are absent too.

MACD Let our just censures  
Attend the true event, and put we on  
Industrious soldiiership.

SIW. The time approaches,  
That will with due decision make us know  
What we shall say we have and what we owe.  
Thoughts speculative their unsure hopes relate,  
But certain issue strokes must arbitrate: 20  
Towards which advance the war. [*Exeunt, marching.*]

6 *discovery*] the information retailed by Macbeth's scouts.

11-12 *For where . . . revolt*] Thus the Folios. The passage is obscure.

Johnson substituted *to be gone* for *to be given*. The meaning seems to be wherever there is opportunity of desertion to be offered Macbeth's soldiers, all ranks are bent on revolting from him

14-15 *Let our just censures . . . event*] Let our judgments wait for the actual event so as to be quite accurate. "Just" has a proleptic force

18 *What . . . we owe*] What we shall be able to claim to have of our own and what we owe others; our rights or property and our duties

19 *Thoughts speculative . . . relate*] Surmises and speculations only deal with the uncertainties of hope

## SCENE V — DUNSINANE

## WITHIN THE CASTLE

*Enter MACBETH, SEYTON, and Soldiers, with drum and colours*

MACB. Hang out our banners on the outward  
walls;  
The cry is still "They come:" our castle's strength  
Will laugh a siege to scorn: here let them lie  
Till famine and the ague eat them up:  
Were they not forced with those that should be  
ours,  
We might have met them dareful, beard to beard,  
And beat them backward home. [*A cry of women within.*  
What is that noise?

SEY. It is the cry of women, my good lord. [*Exit.*

MACB. I have almost forgot the taste of fears:  
'The time has been, my senses would have cool'd 10  
To hear a night-shriek, and my fell of hair  
Would at a dismal treatise rouse and stir  
As life were in 't: I have supp'd full with horrors;  
Direness, familiar to my slaughterous thoughts,  
Cannot once start me.

5 *forced*] reinforced.

6 *dareful*] full of defiance.

11-13 *my fell of hair . . . As life were in 't*] Cf. *Hamlet*, III, iv, 121-122:

"Your bedded *hairs*, like *life* in excrementts, Start up and stand an  
end " "Fell of hair" means the "scalp." "A dismal treatise" means  
"a tale of suffering."

*Re-enter SEYTON*

Wherefore was that cry ?

SEY. The queen, my lord, is dead.

MACB. She should have died hereafter;  
There would have been a time for such a word.  
To-morrow, and to-morrow, and to-morrow,  
Creeps in this petty pace from day to day, 20  
To the last syllable of recorded time;  
And all our yesterdays have lighted fools  
The way to dusty death. Out, out, brief candle !  
Life 's but a walking shadow, a poor player  
That struts and frets his hour upon the stage  
And then is heard no more: it is a tale  
Told by an idiot, full of sound and fury,  
Signifying nothing.

*Enter a Messenger*

Thou comest to use thy tongue; thy story quickly.

MESS. Gracious my lord, 30  
I should report that which I say I saw,  
But know not how to do it.

MACB. Well, say, sir.

MESS. As I did stand my watch upon the hill,  
I look'd toward Birnam, and anon, methought,  
The wood began to move.

MACB. Liar and slave !

MESS. Let me endure your wrath, if 't be not so:

17 *should have died*] would have died (in due time).

21 *recorded time*] the records of time

23 *dusty death*] death which brings all to dust.



# MACBETH

ACT V

Within this three mile may you see it coming;  
I say, a moving grove.

MACB. If thou speak'st false,  
Upon the next tree shalt thou hang alive,  
Till famine cling thee: if thy speech be sooth, 40  
I care not if thou dost for me as much.  
I pull in resolution, and begin  
To doubt the equivocation of the fiend  
That lies like truth: "Fear not, till Birnam wood  
Do come to Dunsinane;" and now a wood  
Comes toward Dunsinane. Arm, arm, and out!  
If this which he avouches does appear,  
There is nor flying hence nor tarrying here.  
I 'gin to be a-weary of the sun,  
And wish the estate o' the world were now undone. 50  
Ring the alarum-bell! Blow, wind! come, wrack!  
At least we'll die with harness on our back. [*Exeunt.*]

## SCENE VI — DUNSINANE

### BEFORE THE CASTLE

*Drum and colours. Enter MALCOLM, old SIWARD, MACDUFF, and  
their Army, with boughs*

MAL. Now near enough; your leavy screens throw  
down,  
And show like those you are. You, worthy uncle,

40 *cling thee*] shrivel thee up. The word is still so used in provincial dialects.

42 *I pull in resolution*] I waver in courage. Thus the Folios. "Pull  
in" means "rein in," "check," as of pulling in a horse.

50 *the estate o' the world*] the settled order of things.

52 *harness*] armour.

## SCENE VII

## MACBETH

Shall, with my cousin, your right noble son,  
Lead our first battle: worthy Macduff and we  
Shall take upon 's what else remains to do,  
According to our order.

SIW. Fare you well.  
Do we but find the tyrant's power to-night,  
Let us be beaten, if we cannot fight.

MACD. Make all our trumpets speak; give them all  
breath,  
Those clamorous harbingers of blood and death. 10  
[*Excunt.*]

## SCENE VII — ANOTHER PART OF THE FIELD

*Alarums. Enter MACBETH*

MACB. They have tied me to a stake; I cannot fly,  
But bear-like I must fight the course. What 's he  
That was not born of woman? Such a one  
Am I to fear, or none.

*Enter young SIWARD*

YO. SIW. What is thy name?

MACB. Thou'lt be afraid to hear it.

YO. SIW. No; though thou call'st thyself a hotter  
name  
Than any is in hell.

---

4 *first battle*] first battalion or squadron; the van of the army

SC. VII, 2 *fight the course*] technically used of a bout in bear-baiting when  
the dogs are let loose on the bear

# MACBETH

ACT V

MACB. My name 's Macbeth.

YO. SIW. The devil himself could not pronounce a  
title

More hateful to mine ear.

MACB. No, nor more fearful.

YO. SIW. Thou liest, abhorred tyrant; with my sword 10  
I'll prove the lie thou speak'st.

*[They fight, and young Siward is slain.]*

MACB. Thou wast born of woman.

But swords I smile at, weapons laugh to scorn,  
Brandish'd by man that 's of a woman born. *[Exit.]*

*Alarums. Enter MACDUFF*

MACD. That way the noise is. Tyrant, show thy face!  
If thou be'st slain and with no stroke of mine,  
My wife and children's ghosts will haunt me still.  
I cannot strike at wretched kerns, whose arms  
Are hired to bear their staves: either thou, Macbeth,  
Or else my sword, with an unbatter'd edge,  
I sheathe again undeeded. There thou shouldst be; 20  
By this great clatter, one of greatest note  
Seems bruited: let me find him, fortune!  
And more I beg not. *[Exit. Alarums.]*

*Enter MALCOLM and old SIWARD*

SIW. This way, my lord; the castle's gently render'd:  
The tyrant's people on both sides do fight;

17 *kerns*] here loosely used for "boors," but properly "light-armed Irish foot-soldiers," as at I, ii, 13, *supra*.

22 *Seems bruited*] Seems indicated (by the noise).

24 *gently render'd*] peacefully surrendered.

## SCENE VIII

## MACBETH

The noble thanes do bravely in the war;  
The day almost itself professes yours,  
And little is to do.

MAL. We have met with foes  
That strike beside us.

SIW. Enter, sir, the castle.

[*Exeunt. Alarum.*]

## SCENE VIII — ANOTHER PART OF THE FIELD

*Enter MACBETH*

MACB. Why should I play the Roman fool, and die  
On mine own sword? whiles I see lives, the gashes  
Do better upon them.

*Enter MACDUFF*

MACD. Turn, hell-hound, turn!

MACB. Of all men else I have avoided thee:  
But get thee back; my soul is too much charged  
With blood of thine already.

MACD. I have no words:  
My voice is in my sword, thou bloodier villain  
Than terms can give thee out! [*They fight.*]

29 *That strike beside us*] That miss their aim at us, fail to strike us

1-2 *Why should . . . sword?*] a reference apparently to either Cassius  
or Brutus, who took their own lives in this fashion

2-3 *whiles I see lives . . . them*] whilst I see living foes, I shall do better  
in cutting them about.

8 *terms can give thee out*] words can describe thee.

ACT V

MACD. Despair thy charm,  
And let the angel whom thou still hast served  
Tell thee, Macduff was from his mother's womb  
Untimely ripp'd.

MACB. Accurs'd be that tongue that tells me so,  
For it hath cow'd my better part of man!  
And be these juggling fiends no more believed,  
That palter with us in a double sense;  
That keep the word of promise to our ear,  
And break it to our hope. I'll not fight with thee.

MACD. Then yield thee, coward,  
And live to be the show and gaze o' the time:  
We'll have thee, as our rarer monsters are,  
Painted upon a pole, and underwrit,  
"Here may you see the tyrant."

MACB. I will not yield,  
To kiss the ground before young Malcolm's feet,  
And to be baited with the rabble's curse.  
Though Birnam wood be come to Dunsinane, so

9 *intrenchant air*] invulnerable, incapable of being cut. Cf. III, iv, 27, *supra*: "trenched gashes"

12 *a charmed life*] a life secured by magic charms against evil.

14 *angel*] evil angel, demon. Cf. III, i, 59, *supra*: "my *genius* is rebuked."

20 *palter . . . sense*] shuffle, equivocate with us<sup>4</sup> in ambiguous expressions.

26 *upon a pole*] on a cloth suspended from a pole over a booth at a fair.

And thou opposed, being of no woman born,  
 Yet I will try the last: before my body  
 I throw my warlike shield: lay on, Macduff;  
 And damn'd be him that first cries "Hold, enough!"  
[*Exeunt, fighting. Alarums.*]

*Retreat. Flourish. Enter, with drum and colours, MALCOLM, old  
 SIWARD, ROSS, the other Thanes, and Soldiers*

MAL. I would the friends we miss were safe arrived.

SIW. Some must go off: and yet, by these I see,  
 So great a day as this is cheaply bought.

MAL. Macduff is missing, and your noble son.

ROSS. 'Your son, my lord, has paid a soldier's debt:  
 He only lived but till he was a man; 40  
 The which no sooner had his prowess confirm'd  
 In the unshrinking station where he fought,  
 But like a man he died.

SIW. Then he is dead?

ROSS. Ay, and brought off the field: your cause of  
 sorrow

---

32 *the last*] the latter of the two alternatives, viz., of yielding to Macduff  
 and of fighting him.

34 "*Hold, enough!*" the ordinary cry acknowledging defeat in a duel

34 (Stage Direction) *Exeunt, fighting. Alarums*] Thus Pope The Folio  
 after *Alarums* adds *Enter Fighting, and Macbeth slaine*, words which  
 suggest that Macduff and Macbeth were intended to reappear on the  
 stage together, and to bring their fight to a close with Macbeth's fall,  
 in the sight of the audience. In any case Macbeth's body must have  
 been quickly removed for the purpose of decapitation. All editions  
 make Macduff enter anew with Macbeth's head, at line 53.

36 *Some must go off*] Some must die.

42 *unshrinking station*] exposed station where he fought without shrinking

# MACBETH

ACT V

Must not be measured by his worth, for then  
It hath no end.

SIW. Had he his hurts before?

ROSS. Ay, on the front.

SIW. Why then, God's soldier be he!  
Had I as many sons as I have hairs,  
I would not wish them to a fairer death:  
And so his knell is knoll'd.

MAL. He 's worth more sorrow, 50  
And that I 'll spend for him.

SIW. He 's worth no more:  
They say he parted well and paid his score:  
And so God be with him! Here comes newer comfort.

*Re-enter MACDUFF, with MACBETH's head*

MACD. Hail, king! for so thou art: behold, where  
stands  
The usurper's cursed head: the time is free:  
I see thee compass'd with thy kingdom's pearl,  
That speak my salutation in their minds;  
Whose voices I desire aloud with mine:  
Hail, King of Scotland!

ALL. Hail, King of Scotland! [*Flourish.*]

MAL. We shall not spend a large expense of time 60

52 *parted well*] departed well, made a good end.

53 (Stage Direction) *with MACBETH's head*] Thus the Folios. Malone  
added from Holinshed the words *on a pole*.

56 *thy kingdom's pearl*] the flower of the nobility. There is an implicit  
allusion to the row of pearls which commonly encircled a king's  
crown.

Before we reckon with your several loves,  
 And make us even with you. My thanes and kinsmen,  
 Henceforth be earls, the first that ever Scotland  
 In such an honour named. What 's more to do,  
 Which would be planted newly with the time,  
 As calling home our exiled friends abroad  
 That fled the snares of watchful tyranny,  
 Producing forth the cruel ministers  
 Of this dead butcher and his fiend-like queen,  
 Who, as 't is thought, by self and violent hands  
 Took off her life; this, and what needful else  
 That calls upon us, by the grace of Grace  
 We will perform in measure, time and place:  
 So thanks to all at once and to each one,  
 Whom we invite to see us crown'd at Scone.

70

[*Flourish. Exeunt.*]

---

70 *by self and violent hands*] Cf. *Rich. II*, III, ii, 166: "with *self and vain* conceit "

72 *by the grace of Grace*] by the mercy of Heaven. Shakespeare is fond of this verbal reduplication. Cf. *All 's well*, II, i, 159: "The great'st *grace* lending *graces*"





# KING LEAR







## APPENDIX

INSTRUCTIONS TO THE JURY

THE COURT HAS READ THE EVIDENCE TO YOU. YOU MUST DECIDE IF THE PROSECUTOR HAS PROVEN BEYOND A REASONABLE DOUBT THAT THE DEFENDANT IS GUILTY OF THE CHARGE.

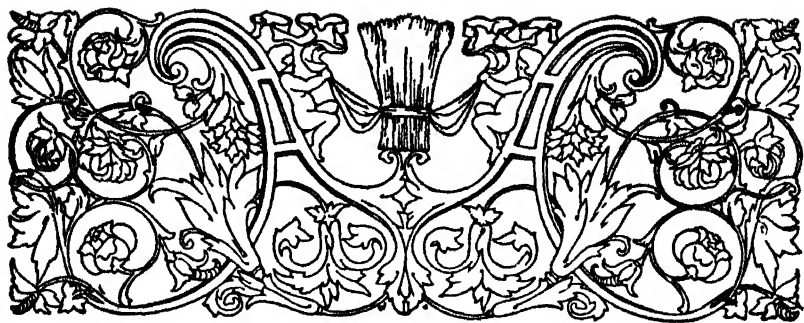


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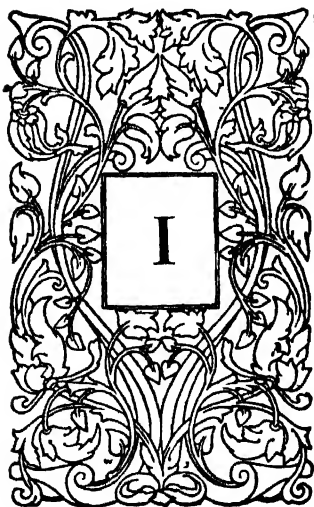
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## INTRODUCTION



IT has been said — and I think the position a tenable one — that Shakespeare's supremacy is nowhere more manifest than in the instinct which guided the selection of his themes. The materials on which he drew were open to all the busy band of his contemporary playwrights ; but it was he, and no other, who laid hands upon the great type-tragedies in "Romeo and Juliet," "Hamlet," "Othello," "Macbeth," "King Lear." It is not merely in workmanship, but in the universal significance of their subject-matter, that these consummate embodiments of love, pessimism, jealousy, ambition, and ingratitude overtop all other works of their time. As we review the tragic themes treated by

## KING LEAR

the lesser Elizabethans, does it ever occur to us to say of this one that Shakespeare ought to have preferred it to the myth of "Romeo and Juliet," of that other that he would have found it more inspiring than the story of "Macbeth," or of a third that he might have made of it something sublimer, more elemental, than "King Lear"? In no single instance, I venture to say, does such a thought suggest itself. Goethe, indeed, has shown that there were great possibilities in the theme of Marlowe's "Dr. Faustus"; but even in this case, though it is curious to speculate how Shakespeare might have dealt with the legend, we should be sorry, I believe, to exchange, say, "Hamlet" for the greatest "Faust" imaginable. For the rest, who ever thought of lamenting that Shakespeare had not chosen the subject of "Volpone" or of "The Duchess of Malfy," or of "The Changeling," or of "The Broken Heart," or of "The Maid's Tragedy," or of "A Woman Killed with Kindness," in lieu of any one of his great tragic themes? All these stories, and such as these, whatever their individual interest, are inferior in point of universal significance to those which Shakespeare has made his own. They rank at best with Shakespeare's second-rate subjects — the themes, for instance, of "Measure for Measure," "All's Well," or "Cymbeline" — while the first-rate subjects tower above them in view of an inherent greatness which Shakespeare alone perceived. The fact that some of these stories had already been treated by nameless playwrights in lost or forgotten plays does not in the least conflict with this view. It matters not a jot whether Shakespeare found his material

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in narrative or in dramatic form. The point is that he first perceived and brought to light the typical quality of these themes, and that no one else in his time, and only the very greatest in any other time, can be shown to have possessed a similar instinct for going straight to the heart of things, not only in the treatment, but in the selection, of their material. A further illustration of this gift may be found in his Roman tragedies. While Ben Jonson was content with elaborately reconstructing the melodramatic episodes of "Catiline" and "Sejanus," Shakespeare claimed as his own the world-historic crises associated with the names of "Julius Caesar" and "Antony and Cleopatra." One could almost imagine that the other playwrights purposely stood aside, and left him the great themes in right of undisputed sovereignty.

Is it wholly fanciful to conjecture a certain significance in the fact that, apart from the Roman trio, Shakespeare's great tragedies number just as many as the acts into which, accepting the classical tradition, he invariably divided his plays? At any rate, whether the number means anything or nothing, it is certain that this series of five plays presents an epitome of human life almost as systematic as that which Jaques outlines in the "Seven Ages." In "Romeo and Juliet" we have the budding instinct of love, in its first pathetic freshness, rushing to destruction through its own impetuosity. "Hamlet" shows the depression and disillusionment which so often beset a youth of delicate susceptibilities, on his first rude contact with the world full of cruelty, lust, and hypocrisy. In "Othello" we find maturity mated with youth, and tor-

## KING LEAR

tured to death by the subtly-injected poison of jealousy. "Macbeth" shows us another of the calamities incident to ripe manhood—ambition, the morbid craving for power, fomented, as it normally would be, by that conjugal egoism which is all the fiercer for wearing a mask of self-devotion. And—"last scene of all that ends this strange eventful history"—"King Lear" presents to us the sombre tragedy of old age, deposition, supersession, neglect, filial ingratitude. Is not this a veritable encyclopædia of human experience, in its darker and more ominous phases? And is there any other Elizabethan tragedy which (even were its workmanship Shakespearian) could possibly claim admission to the series in virtue of the typical universality of its subject-matter?<sup>1</sup> All the leading figures of these plays have become terms of constant employment in the symbol-speech of the whole world.

We may regard "King Lear," then, as the last of a great cycle of tragedies. Let us note, too, that in all probability it was the latest in date of composition. This is not the place for complex chronological arguments: I am content to accept Mr. Sidney Lee's arrangement of the plays, which runs as follows: "Romeo and Juliet," early in the fifteen-nineties; "Hamlet," 1602; "Othello," 1604; "Macbeth," 1605; "King Lear," 1606. We know for certain that the tragedy of adolescence was by a long way the first of the series, and that the tragedy of early manhood came second; while the best evidence goes to

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<sup>1</sup> If there be one, it is "Antony and Cleopatra," the counterpart to "Romeo and Juliet," contrasting with the passion of youth, the infatuation of middle age.

## INTRODUCTION

show that the two tragedies of maturity stood third and fourth, and the tragedy of old age fifth and last. Can we regard this ordering of the mighty pageant as a mere chance? Does it not raise a presumption that the poet, who had mapped out the normal career of man, from a humouristic point of view, in the "Seven Ages," consciously devoted himself to the sequent composition of a cycle of type tragedies, or, as Balzac might have phrased it, a "Tragédie Humaine"? I do not suggest, of course, that he had this idea in mind from the moment he sat down to write "Romeo and Juliet"; but it may very well have arisen in his consciousness during the years when he was brooding over "Hamlet."

Even if this supposition be rejected as fanciful, the fact remains that "King Lear" is pre-eminently the tragedy of old age. There is only one other play in which the pathos of old age is treated with any approach to the like sublimity, and that is, of course, the "Œdipus Coloneus" of Sophocles. But how far less typical is the situation of Œdipus! His wretchedness arises, not from misfortunes to which old age is in the nature of things exposed — doting fondness, doting irascibility, the devouring egoism of the younger generation — but from strange and monstrous happenings in the past, which are so far from being generally characteristic of the human lot that they are conceivable only as the outcome of special malice on the part of the gods. We have none of us known an Œdipus, we have all of us, probably, seen re-enacted some part of the tragedy of Lear. The Père Goriot of Balzac is a Lear, not an Œdipus. It was to Shakespeare, not to

## KING LEAR

Sophocles, that Turgenieff went for the key-note of his "King Lear of the Steppes." Looking at a deserted fortress lingering on in superfluous decrepitude, Henrik Ibsen wrote,

"I seem to see, as I gaze on thee,  
King Lear on the storm-swept moorland."

Lear is the supreme symbol of a fate which does not — thank heaven! — overtake every one, but which may befall any one who survives his direct usefulness to the younger generation. He is the victim of an innate tendency in human — nay, in animal — nature, undisguised in the savage, more or less imperfectly corrected or dissembled in the civilised man. The fate of *Œdipus*, on the other hand, is unique. Its horror lies in its almost unthinkable remoteness from natural probability. I am not belittling the one play to magnify the other; I am not comparing them in respect of their whole poetic content. I am merely pointing out that *King Lear* is — what *Œdipus* is not — an example of one of the typical incidents of human destiny. He is the embodiment for all time of the tragic aspect of old age.

In this fact, rather than in any personal mood of the poet, I think we must look for the explanation of the chill and murky atmosphere, the desolate environment, in which the action is placed. That Shakespeare, as he grew older, saw more and more deeply into the tragic side of existence, is not only probable, but certain. At twenty-eight, his imagination, stimulated by experience, was adequate to the creation of "*Romeo and Juliet*"; it

## INTRODUCTION

needed the accumulated observation and experience of fourteen more years to enable him to grapple with such a subject as that of "King Lear." But it is wholly unnecessary to conceive that any special mood of misanthropy, any personal disgust with life or alienation from his kind, inspired this or his other great tragedies. If there is any evidence of his having passed through such a mood, we must seek it in "Troilus and Cressida" and, more doubtfully, in "Timon of Athens"—certainly not in the play which is irradiated by the figure of Cordelia, and contains such an embodiment of steadfast nobility as Edgar, of loyal manhood as Kent, of tender faithfulness as the Fool. The atmosphere was prescribed by the subject. I do not mean merely that history—or what Shakespeare accepted as history—placed the saga of King Lear in a remote and barbarous antiquity. It is doubtful how far Shakespeare recognised this fact. He does not seem to have thought of Cornwall, Albany, Gloucester, or Kent as more distinctively barbarians than the barons in "King John," or even in later histories. Though the prevalent religion is paganism, the civilisation represented is simply that of feudal times, as it was conventionally understood on the Elizabethan stage. The gloom which hangs in the air of the play is begotten of the subject, not in its historical aspect, but in its essence as a phase of human destiny. What skies can be sad enough for the tragedy of old age,—what environment too sombre, what accessories too cruel? In all other dramas, however disastrous their issue, the protagonists have at any rate vigour, vitality,



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passion to sustain them. They grapple with their foes, they affront their destiny, on equal terms. They can, with Romeo, rejoice of their own free will to

“ Shake the yoke of inauspicious stars  
From this world-wearied flesh ; ”

or they can cry, with Macbeth,

“ Blow, wind ! come, wrack !  
At least we ’ll die with harness on our back ! ”

But the tragedy of old age is rooted in decay, and can take no other form than that of monstrous cruelty. The decline of life, the waning of physical and mental power, the gradual encroachments of helplessness, are sufficiently melancholy of themselves, even with the alleviations of “ honour, love, obedience, troops of friends.” But when these alleviations are denied — when insult takes the place of honour, and callousness of love — earth has no sadder spectacle to show. It was the poet’s task to present this spectacle in its typical deformity, and he naturally created an environment in hideous harmony with the main theme. Hence the machinations of Edmund, the blinding of Gloucester, the savage rivalry of Goneril and Regan, the subordinate villainies of the Steward and the Captain. They keep the picture in tone. A world of ingratitude, cruelty, and crime was indispensable to the main purpose of giving its utmost poignancy to the pathos of old age. Theme for theme, the physical and moral climate of “ King Lear ” is as inevitable as the physical and moral climate of “ Romeo and Juliet.”

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It must be considered, moreover, that to have made the hypocrisy and leagued ingratitude of Goneril and Regan a single blot upon an otherwise sunlit and kindly world would have been to divest it of typical quality and make of it one of those criminal aberrations that now and then startle the most civilised communities, and seem causeless as bolts from the blue. That was not Shakespeare's design. A chance enormity did not interest him. Such things he left to Webster and the melodramatists. It was the universal for which he cared. He wanted to show the fate of Lear as exceptional in degree, no doubt, but not in kind. The phenomenon with which he dealt — or rather the two complementary phenomena, the superfluousness of age and the egoism of youth — belonged to the very constitution of things, the primal mechanism of Nature. The letter which Edmund forges in Edgar's name succinctly sets forth the motive of the whole action : " This policy and reverence of age makes the world bitter to the best of our times ; keeps our fortunes from us till our oldness cannot relish them. I begin to find an idle and fond bondage in the oppression of aged tyranny, who sways, not as it hath power, but as it is suffered." Regan, Goneril, and Edmund represent in its crudest form the principle of the survival of the fittest ; Cordelia and Edgar show that the entrance of moral ideas into the world has once for all modified the definition of true " fitness." When Edmund says, " Thou, Nature, art my goddess," he talks the language of misapplied Darwinism' — of the evolutionism which fails to perceive that the purpose of Nature, the quantity and in-

## KING LEAR

tensity of life towards which she is for ever striving, is better served by sympathy and humanity than by the relentless, untempered struggle for life which prevails in the Indian jungle or the African swamp. His goddess is "Nature, red in tooth and claw"; and it is the purpose of the play — or rather its effect, for Shakespeare knew these things by instinct, not by theory — to show that this is a self-defeating, self-devouring Nature, from which, somehow or other, a higher Nature has evolved itself. The same unbridled egoism which sends Lear out into the storm and betrays Gloucester to the brutal Cornwall, brings Goneril, Regan, and Edmund unfruitful and unpitied to their graves. But this principle could not be illustrated in a single example. It was necessary to show the higher instincts — the instincts of sympathy, gratitude, humanity, — outraged on every hand, in order to show how the insurgence of the lower instincts made, not for life, but for death, and so balked the purpose of Nature. Thus the tragedy of old age became at the same time the picture of a recrudescence of animal egoism. Such a picture could not be exhilarating; but to find in it an expression of personal pessimism is to ignore at once the conditions and the issue of the case. To show humanity reacting at every point against cruelty — not only in Cordelia and Edgar, but in Kent, Albany, and Cornwall's servant — and to show cruelty barren, devastating, and feeding on itself, is surely not to express despair of the nature and destiny of man.

"But," it may be objected, "though inhumanity perishes, it perishes triumphant. The death of Goneril,

## INTRODUCTION

Regan, and Edmund is balanced by the death of Lear, Cordelia, and Gloucester." Yes, because Shakespeare's philosophy was as remote from superficial optimism as from cankered pessimism. The death of Lear was a poetical necessity. What other end is possible to the tragedy of old age? To leave him alive — as Nahum Tate did, in the acting version which held the stage for a century and a half — was entirely to deprive the play of its typical quality. It was, moreover, to belittle all that had gone before; as Lamb saw when he wrote: —

"A happy ending! as if the living martyrdom that Lear had gone through — the flaying of his feelings alive, did not make a fair dismissal from the stage of life the only decorous thing for him. . . . As if the childish pleasure of getting his gilt robes and sceptre again could tempt him to act over again his misused station — as if at his years, and with his experience, anything was left but to die."

If it be pessimism to own that old age must end in death, and that there are some calamities which human nature cannot — which it is well that it should not — survive, then, but not otherwise, is "King Lear" a pessimistic play. The same reasoning applies to the death of Gloucester, but not to the killing of Cordelia. For that, it seems to me, there is no philosophic necessity. The play, as a symbol, could not be called incomplete without it. Why, then, is she doomed to die? For a purely dramatic reason, I take it — namely that Lear's death, without hers, would be at once less affecting and less obviously necessary. The poet wanted to give Lear a great "pathos scene" — in the antique sense of the term — and at the same time to break the last tie that attached

## KING LEAR

him to life. Though not inevitable, then, the death of Cordelia is by no means arbitrary or dragged-in. It may rather be called one of the probable incidents of the theme. How often do we see the Lears of the real world in child-like dependence on a Cordelia! And how often is the extinction of the young life the signal for the flickering-out of the old! Here again, as compared with the "Ædipus Coloneus," "King Lear" would seem to rank in a more consummate and universal sense as the tragedy of old age. Cordelia dies, Antigone survives.

It is always important, in studying Shakespeare's intentions in any particular play, to discriminate between those parts of it which he simply accepted from his sources, and those which he added and adapted of his own initiative. The suggestion that he deliberately purposed to make "King Lear" the typical close of what may be called a tragic Seven Ages—or rather Five Ages—series, is strengthened when we find that the fatal issue of the story is of his own invention. "Romeo and Juliet," "Hamlet," "Othello," and "Macbeth," were all ready-made tragedies as they came to his hand; "King Lear" was a romance which, in the face of numerous authorities, he turned into a tragedy. The story must have been known to him in at least four variants: in the prose of Holinshed, in the verse of "A Mirour for Magistrates" and of "The Faery Queen," and in the dramatic form given it by the nameless author of "The True Chronicle Historie of King Leir and his Three Daughters." In all of these versions—and indeed in all versions of the story except the ballad in Percy's "Reliques,"

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which is probably of later date than the play — Lear and Cordelia are victorious, and spend several prosperous years after the unhappy episode is ended. Shakespeare, on the other hand, was determined that it should be no episode, but a catastrophe, a conclusion. A romance with a “happy ending,” such as he afterwards produced in “Cymbeline” and “The Winter’s Tale”—such as actually, in Nahum Tate’s version, supplanted “Lear” itself — would doubtless have been more popular from the first. But it did not suit his purpose. In his mind — so I suggest — the play did not stand alone, an independent entity, but was part of a great whole. He wanted a fifth act for his “Tragédie Humaine” and he saw it in the story of Lear. • He remembered, too, that in Sidney’s “Arcadia” there occurred a very similar story of a Paphlagonian king who, “drunk in his affection to an unlawful and unnatural son, suffered himself so to be governed by him that . . . . ere he was aware he had left himself nothing but the name of a king; which the son shortly wearying of too, with many indignities he threw the father out of his seat and put out his eyes.” This second example of the barbarity of the younger to the older generation Shakespeare indissolubly welded with the first. He added, of his own motive, that crowning incident in the tragedy of old — enfeeblement of intellect, delusion, madness. The tempest of the brain he accompanied and intensified by a tempest of the elements, of which, again, there was no hint in his sources. And thus, by selection and amplification, he built up the giant edifice of this terrible last act to the drama of human life.

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That the theme of "King Lear" was originally a folk-tale there can be little doubt. The three daughters — the two elder wicked and the youngest virtuous — belong unmistakably to popular tradition. Indeed a variant of the tale survives — mixed up with the "Cinderella" theme — in the Suffolk story of "Cap o' Rushes."<sup>1</sup> In this version the Cordelia-sister, when asked by her father how much she loves him, replies, "I love you as fresh meat loves salt"; and, being disowned on account of this seemingly inadequate answer, contrives, by serving up a dinner of entirely unsalted meat, to convince the offended parent that her figure of speech was really very much to the point. When the tale passed into what was accepted as serious history, the compilers did their best to rationalise it. According to Holinshed, for example, Lear gave up only half his kingdom to the husbands of Goneril and Regan; and they, after a considerable time, "thinking long ere the government of the land did come to their hands, arose against him in armour, and reft from him the governance of the whole." In "A Mirour for Magistrates," Lear disinherits Cordelia for her supposed coldness towards him, but the partition of the kingdom is forced upon him by the rebellion of his British sons-in-law. In Spenser, who tells the story very briefly, the division of the kingdom is to take place immediately, but it is to be an equal division, and there is no suggestion that the daughter who is loudest in her protestations of love is to have the largest share. In the old play of "King Leir," Skalliger, an evil-minded noble, suggests the divi-

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<sup>1</sup> See "English Fairy Tales," collected by Joseph Jacobs. London, 1890, p. 51.

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sion of the kingdom in proportion to the professions of love; but Leir expressly disclaims any such design. On the other hand he provides himself with an ingenious motive for putting his daughters' affection to the test. Cordella — it was Spenser who first called her Cordelia — is altogether indisposed to marriage; and Leir, never doubting that she will outbid her sisters in vehemence of protestation, intends "to take her at the vantage" and ask her to make good her professions by marrying the man whom he shall choose for her —

"Even as she doth protest she loves me best,  
Ile say, Then, daughter, graunt me one request,  
To shew thou lovest me as thy sisters doe,  
Accept a husband, whom myselfe will woo."

This is not a very brilliant device; but it shows that the dramatist was alive to the absurdity of the old King's conduct, and wanted to soften it down. In short, all the authorities with whom Shakespeare must have been acquainted<sup>1</sup> tried, in a greater or less degree, to dress up the fairy tale in a disguise of historic or dramatic plausibility.

Now it is curious, and not easily explicable, that Shakespeare should have rejected all rationalising of the story, and gone out of his way, it would seem, to thrust the fairy-tale element into the foreground. The necessity for dramatic compression would, of course, lead him to prefer the version which made King Lear's transference of power immediate and complete; and the putting up of the kingdom to a sort of auction, in which the

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<sup>1</sup> There is no good ground for doubting that Shakespeare knew the old play.



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princesses should outbid one another in effusiveness, was a touch of senility (suggested, though not acted' on, in the old play) that admirably accorded with his general design. But, having made King Lear conceive this plan, why should the poet at once proceed to show that the portions are predetermined, and the boasting-match an empty form? It is probable enough that Lear, nothing doubting that Cordelia's love will be the loudest, should mentally, or even on paper, have mapped out for her the largest share; but why should he reveal this fact by openly assigning their portions to Goneril and Regan before Cordelia has spoken? Dr. Bucknill has found in this inconsistency a proof that Shakespeare would have us regard Lear as mad from the outset; but in that case how is it that none of those around him notice his aberration? It cannot be urged that they do notice it, but are silent out of respect. Kent, far from being silent, actually declares that Lear is "mad," yet omits to call attention to this crowning proof of insanity. I have heard it ingeniously argued that dramatic effect, the rhetorical working-up of the scene, demanded that after each daughter's speech the King should instantly assign her her portion. The fact is surely the other way: the dramatic effect would be greatly heightened if the King listened with an inscrutable countenance to his daughters' protestations, and reserved to the last the apportionment of their dowers. But even if the dramatic-effect argument were good in itself, it would be a poor defence; for the effect which is attained at the cost of a glaring inconsistency is scarcely worth having. On the whole, I can-

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not but think that we have here one of those pieces of inexplicable incuriousness, not to say slovenliness, that we so often encounter in Shakespeare. Dr. Bucknill is probably right in supposing that Lear's failure to keep his counsel, his blurting out of the fact that he has mentally anticipated the result of the test, is to be taken as a symptom, if not of madness, at any rate of the forgetful impatience of senility ; but it is none the less a fault to have made so gross a self-contradiction pass unnoticed by all the bystanders.

The truth is, no doubt, that Shakespeare felt it impossible to dissemble the fairy-tale element in the groundwork of his play (the conduct of Cordelia being, indeed, as improbable as that of Lear) and thought it best to face the improbabilities and have done with them, as rapidly as possible. The first scene of " King Lear " is much more of a mere prologue than the opening passages of " Hamlet," " Macbeth," or " Othello." The abundance of rhyme in it may perhaps be taken as a confession of its more or less conventional character. It was a favourite principle of the late Francisque Sarcey that an audience has no right to cavil at a dramatist's preliminary assumptions, so long as the action he deduces from them is logical and interesting. Shakespeare seems to have anticipated this principle, and to have hastened through the preliminaries of " King Lear " in his impatience to get at the essential action. It will be noticed that the starting-point of the under-plot is also very lightly hurried over. Not only Gloucester, but the acute and capable Edgar, falls a victim with astonishing facility to the machinations of Edmund.

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Shakespeare probably felt that he had not space within the narrow limits of drama to go fully into these matters. He must state his assumptions briefly, and trust to the good-will of his audience to accept them. As for Edmund, he makes him adopt precisely the method of Iago, and achieve in about five minutes a triumph of perfidy which Iago needed two whole acts to carry through. Thus the preliminaries of the action are dismissed in two rapid scenes, making just half of the first act; and space is left for the leisurely development of the moral and psychological consequences.

It would be idle to repeat the eulogies passed by a thousand critics upon the great central scenes of the tragedy. Disquisitions upon Shakespeare's mastery of this or that branch of technical knowledge are always to be taken with reserve; but there is no shadow of doubt that he has indicated the progressive phases of Lear's insanity with an accuracy in which the scrutiny of experts can find no flaw. Equally certain is it that he discriminates with astonishing nicety between the real frenzy of Lear, the assumed idiocy of Edgar, and the professional and ironic insanity of the Fool. This symphony of madness is one of the most extraordinary inventions in literature; but it seems to me, I own, that Shakespeare paid dear for it in the inevitable frigidity of Edgar's ravings. Critics have objected, not without some reason, to the blinding of Gloucester, as an intolerable brutality. Shakespeare borrowed it from the "Arcadia" because he required, as a pendent to the calamity of Lear, another calamity comparable in magnitude and yet clearly differ-

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ent. Simply to turn Gloucester out of his castle and send him wandering would have been to perpetrate a tedious anti-climax ; so he accepted Sidney's suggestion, and made Gloucester's physical blindness the counterpart to the darkening of Lear's mental vision. But to explain his retention of this feature of the original story is not necessarily to justify the enactment of Cornwall's atrocity upon the open stage. The incident brings home to us once more the paradox of the Elizabethan audience — its power of accepting, and even demanding, in intimate juxtaposition, the most exquisite emanations of the human spirit and crude survivals of barbarism in language and manners.

The closing scenes of the play lack something of that unity of dramatic impulse which carries us forward so irresistibly in "Hamlet" and "Othello"; but in pathos and sublimity they are peerless. If, as I have ventured to fancy, Shakespeare felt that in the conclusion of "Lear" he was ending, not this play alone, but a great tragic cycle — a processional pageant of human destiny — he certainly rose to the occasion with a mastery unexcelled in any earlier passage of the vast creation. Never before or since has the passing of old age been depicted with such grandeur of simplicity. By how many death-beds, to how many thousands of men and women, must Kent's immortal lines have recurred, as the consummate, the only possible, utterance of the emotion of the moment : —

"Vex not his ghost: O, let him pass ' he hates him  
That would upon the rack of this tough world  
Stretch him out longer."

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Be it noted that it is of old age, and nothing else, that Lear dies. Encompassed by cruelty, in a time of bloody deeds, he has yet suffered no physical injury. He shows no symptom of actual disease ; he succumbs to sheer exhaustion of the vital forces. Shakespeare felt that dagger and bowl would here have been out of place. A violent death would have been as illogical as a "happy ending." He was writing the Tragedy of Eld, and to that there is but one conclusion. It is Nature herself that brings the quietus.

WILLIAM ARCHER.

# **KING LEAR**

## DRAMATIS PERSONÆ

LEAR, king of Britain.

KING OF FRANCE.

DUKE OF BURGUNDY.

DUKE OF CORNWALL.

DUKE OF ALBANY.

EARL OF KENT.

EARL OF GLOUCESTER.

EDGAR, son to Gloucester.

EDMUND, bastard son to Gloucester.

CURAN, a courtier.

Old Man, tenant to Gloucester.

Doctor.

Fool.

OSWALD, steward to Goneril.

A captain employed by Edmund.

Gentleman attendant on Cordelia.

Herald.

Servants to Cornwall.

GONERIL,

REGAN, daughters to Lear.

CORDELIA,

Knights of Lear's train, Captains, Messengers, Soldiers, and  
Attendants.

SCENE: *Britain*

<sup>1</sup> This play was first printed in Quarto in 1608, when two impressions were published, both with somewhat confused text. An improved version from a different transcript was supplied by the First Folio, which first divided the play into Acts and Scenes. Rowe first added a list of the "dramatis personæ" and indicated the general "Scene."

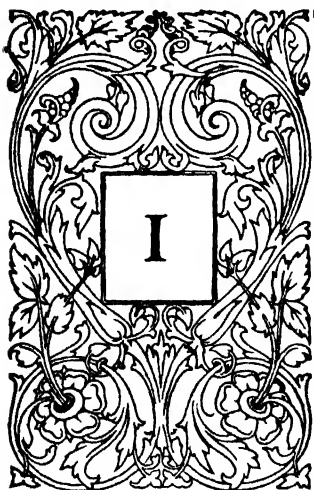


ACT FIRST — SCENE I

KING LEAR'S PALACE

*Enter KENT, GLOUCESTER, and EDMUND*

KENT



THOUGHT THE KING  
had more affected the Duke of  
Albany than Cornwall.

GLOU. It did always seem so  
to us: but now, in the division  
of the kingdom, it appears not  
which of the dukes he values  
most; for equalities are so  
weighed that curiosity in neither  
can make choice of either's  
moiety.

KENT. Is not this your son,  
my lord?

GLOU. His breeding, sir, hath been at my charge: I  
have 'so often blushed to acknowledge him that now  
I am brazed to it.

10

1 *more affected*] showed greater affection for.



# KING LEAR

## ACT I

KENT. I cannot conceive you.

GLOU. Sir, this young fellow's mother could: where-upon she grew round-wombed, and had indeed, sir, a son for her cradle ere she had a husband for her bed. Do you smell a fault?

KENT. I cannot wish the fault undone, the issue of it being so proper.

GLOU. But I have, sir, a son by order of law, some year elder than this, who yet is no dearer in my account: though this knave came something saucily into the world <sup>20</sup> before he was sent for, yet was his mother fair; there was good sport at his making, and the whoreson must be acknowledged. Do you know this noble gentleman, Edmund?

EDM. No, my lord.

GLOU. My lord of Kent: remember him hereafter as my honourable friend.

EDM. My services to your lordship.

KENT. I must love you, and sue to know you better.

EDM. Sir, I shall study deserving. <sup>30</sup>

GLOU. He hath been out nine years, and away he shall again. The king is coming.

5-6 *equalities* . . . *moiety*] There is such well-balanced equality in the distribution that close scrutiny cannot determine one portion to be any greater than the other. For *equalities*, the reading of the early Quartos, the Folios read *qualities*, which is plausible. "Moiety" commonly stands for "portion," not necessarily "half."

10 *brazed*] brazened, hardened.

17 *proper*] goodly, handsome.

19 *account*] esteem.

30 *study deserving*] study to be worthy (of your acquaintance).

31 *out*] abroad, away from home.

*Sennet. Enter one bearing a coronet, KING LEAR, CORNWALL, ALBANY, GONERIL, REGAN, CORDELIA, and Attendants*

LEAR. Attend the lords of France and Burgundy,  
Gloucester.

GLOU. I shall, my liege. [*Exeunt Gloucester and Edmund.*]

LEAR. Meantime we shall express our darker purpose.  
Give me the map there. Know we have divided  
In three our kingdom: and 't is our fast intent  
To shake all cares and business from our age,  
Conferring them on younger strengths, while we  
Unburthen'd crawl toward death. Our son of Corn-  
wall,

40

And you, our no less loving son of Albany,  
We have this hour a constant will to publish  
Our daughters' several dowers, that future strife  
May be prevented now. The princes, France and Bur-  
gundy,

33 (stage direction) *Sennet*] A note of music commonly indicating the entrance or exit of important characters.

*Attend the lords*] Bid the lords attend upon us

35 *darker*] more secret. The king has already indicated his general intention of distributing his dominions. He now discloses the hitherto concealed grounds and details of his procedure

37 *fast intent*] fixed resolve; "constant will" (line 42) has the same meaning. Cf the Latin "*certa voluntas*"

38 *from our age*] Thus the Folios. The Quartos read *of our state*

39 *Conferring . . . strengths*] Thus the Folios. The Quartos read *Confirming . . . yeares*. Cf. line 81, *infra*, where the Quartos again read *confirmed* for the Folio reading *conferr'd*.

# KING LEAR

## ACT I

Great rivals in our youngest daughter's love,  
 Long in our court have made their amorous sojourn,  
 And here are to be answer'd. Tell me, my daughters,  
 Since now we will divest us both of rule,  
 Interest of territory, cares of state,  
 Which of you shall we say doth love us most? 50  
 That we our largest bounty may extend  
 Where nature doth with merit challenge. Goneril,  
 Our eldest-born, speak first.

GON. Sir, I love you more than words can wield the  
 matter,  
 Dearer than eye-sight, space and liberty,  
 Beyond what can be valued, rich or rare,  
 No less than life, with grace, health, beauty, honour,  
 As much as child e'er loved or father found;  
 A love that makes breath poor and speech unable;  
 Beyond all manner of so much I love you. 60

COR. [*Aside*] What shall Cordelia do? Love, and be  
 silent.

LEAR. Of all these bounds, even from this line to this,

49 *Interest of territory*] Profit derived from possession of territory.

52 *Where nature . . . challenge*] Where natural affection prefers a claim  
 equally with merit, where the due of natural affection coincides with  
 the due of merit.

54 *than words . . . matter*] than can be fully expressed in words.

55 *space and liberty*] fullest range of liberty.

57 *with grace*] endowed with grace.

59 *unable*] incapable, feeble.

60 *Beyond all manner of so much*] Beyond all such kind of comparisons.

61 *do*] Thus the Quartos. The Folios read *speak*, which is scarcely in  
 keeping with Cordelia's mistrust of verbal professions.

With shadowy forests and with champains rich'd,  
 With plenteous rivers and wide-skirted meads,  
 We make thee lady. To thine and Albany's issue  
 Be this perpetual. What says our second daughter,  
 Our dearest Regan, wife to Cornwall? Speak.

REG. I am made of that self metal as my sister,  
 And prize me at her worth. In my true heart  
 I find she names my very deed of love;  
 Only she comes too short: that I profess  
 Myself an enemy to all other joys  
 Which the most precious square of sense possesses,  
 And find I am alone felicitate  
 In your dear highness' love.

70

COR. [Aside] Then poor Cordelia!  
 And yet not so, since I am sure my love's  
 More ponderous than my tongue.

LEAR. To thee and thine hereditary ever  
 Remain this ample third of our fair kingdom,  
 No less in space, validity and pleasure,

80

63 *with champains rich'd*] with open plains enriched.

68 *self*] self-same.

70 *my very deed of love*] the 'exact state of my own love.

73 *Which . . . possesses*] Thus the Quartos. The Folios read *professes* for *possesses*. *Square of sense* is difficult; *spirit* and *sphere* have been adopted by some editors for *square*. But Regan refers to the joys which are associated with the very quintessence of sensibility, and "the most precious square" may well mean "the most precious segment, the summit or acme."

74 *felicitate*] made happy.

76 *yet not so*] *sc.* poor in love.

77 *ponderous*] Thus the Folios. The Quartos read *richer*.

80 *validity*] value, worth.

# KING LEAR

ACT I

Than that conferr'd on Goneril. Now, our joy,  
Although the last, not least, to whose young love  
The vines of France and milk of Burgundy  
Strive to be interest'd, what can you say to draw  
A third more opulent than your sisters? Speak.

COR. Nothing, my lord.

LEAR. Nothing!

COR. Nothing.

LEAR. Nothing will come of nothing: speak again.

COR. Unhappy that I am, I cannot heave 90  
My heart into my mouth: I love your majesty  
According to my bond; nor more nor less.

LEAR. How, how, Cordelia! mend your speech a  
little,

Lest it may mar your fortunes.

COR. Good my lord,  
You have begot me, bred me, loved me: I  
Return those duties back as are right fit,

81 *conferr'd*] See note on line 39, *supra*.

82 *the last, not least*] Thus the Quartos. The expression is proverbial.  
The Folios read wrongly *our last and least*.

82-84 *to whose young love . . . interest'd*] Thus the Folios, save that  
*interest'd* (i. e., interested, concerned) is Jennens' change for the  
original *interest*, which may be a form of "interested." In the Quartos  
*in our deere loue* follows the word *least* without any stop, and the  
whole clause *to whose young love . . . interest'd* is omitted.

83 *milk*] the milk-producing pastures.

89 *Nothing will come of nothing*] Cf. the Latin proverb "*Ex nihilo nihil*  
*fit*." Lear repeats the phrase, I, iv, 42, *infra*.

92 *my bond*] my obligation of filial duty.

96 *Return . . . right fit*] Render those filial duties as they are rightly to  
be rendered.

Obey you, love you, and most honour you.  
 Why have my sisters husbands, if they say  
 They love you all? Haply, when I shall wed,  
 That lord whose hand must take my plight shall carry  
 Half my love with him, half my care and duty: 101  
 Sure, I shall never marry like my sisters,  
 To love my father all.

LEAR. But goes thy heart with this?

COR. Ay, good my lord.

LEAR. So young, and so untender?

COR. So young, my lord, and true.

LEAR. Let it be so; thy truth then be thy dower:  
 For, by the sacred radiance of the sun,  
 The mysteries of Hecate, and the night;  
 By all the operation of the orbs 110  
 From whom we do exist and cease to be;  
 Here I disclaim all my paternal care,  
 Propinquity and property of blood,  
 And as a stranger to my heart and me  
 Hold thee from this for ever. The barbarous Scythian,  
 Or he that makes his generation messes

100 *my plight*] *my plighted troth*.

109 *Hecate*] The goddess of night. The word is pronounced as a dissyllable. Cf. *Macb.*, II, i, 52 and note.

113 *Propinquity* . . . *blood*] Kinship and blood relationship

115 *The barbarous Scythian*] The Scythians are again instanced as the extreme type of barbarism in *Tut Andr.*, I, i, 131: "Was ever *Scythia* half so barbarous?"

116 *he . . . messes*] he that turns his progeny into messes of food, he that eats his children. Hakluyt quotes an account of such cannibal practices among the Tartars (*ed.* 1905, Vol. I, p. 51).

# KING LEAR

ACT I

To gorge his appetite, shall to my bosom  
Be as well neighbour'd, pitied and relieved,  
As thou my sometime daughter.

KENT. Good my liege, —

LEAR. Peace, Kent! '120

Come not between the dragon and his wrath.  
I loved her most, and thought to set my rest  
On her kind nursery. Hence, and avoid my sight!  
So be my grave my peace, as here I give  
Her father's heart from her! Call France. Who stirs?  
Call Burgundy. Cornwall and Albany,  
With my two daughters' dowers digest this third:  
Let pride, which she calls plainness, marry her.  
I do invest you jointly with my power,  
Pre-eminence and all the large effects 130  
That troop with majesty. Ourself, by monthly course,  
With reservation of an hundred knights  
By you to be sustain'd, shall our abode  
Make with you by due turns. Only we still retain  
The name and all the additions to a king;  
The sway, revenue, execution of the rest,  
Beloved sons, be yours: which to confirm,  
This coronet part betwixt you.

122 *set my rest*] stake my all: a technical expression in the card game of "primero."

123 *Hence, and avoid my sight*] These words are clearly addressed to Cordelia, and not to Kent, as many editors suggest.

127 *digest*] absorb.

128 *marry her*] find her a husband.

130 *the large effects*] the spacious attributes or 'dignities.

135 *additions to a king*] titles of a king.

KENT. Royal Lear,  
 Whom I have ever honour'd as my king,  
 Loved as my father, as my master follow'd, 140  
 As my great patron thought on in my prayers, —

LEAR. The bow is bent and drawn; make from the shaft.

KENT. Let it fall rather, though the fork invade  
 The region of my heart: be Kent unmannerly,  
 When Lear is mad. What wouldst thou do, old man?  
 Think'st thou that duty shall have dread to speak,  
 When power to flattery bows? To plainness honour's  
 bound,  
 When majesty stoops to folly. Reverse thy doom,  
 And in thy best consideration check  
 This hideous rashness: answer my life my judgement, 150  
 Thy youngest daughter does not love thee least;  
 Nor are those empty-hearted whose low sound  
 Reverbs no hollowness.

LEAR. Kent; on thy life, no more.

KENT. My life I never held but as a pawn  
 To wage against thy enemies, nor fear to lose it,  
 Thy safety being the motive.

LEAR. Out of my sight!

143 *fork]* arrow-head. Cf. *As you like it*, II, i, 24, "forked heads," *i. e.*, arrow-heads.

148 *stoops . . . Reverse thy doom]* Thus the Quartos. The Folios read *falls to folly reserve thy state* (*i. e.*, retain thy power).

149 *best]* most careful, most deliberate

153 *Reverbs no hollowness]* Reverberates or proclaims no emptiness or insincerity

155 *To wage]* To wager, stake, or hazard.



# KING LEAR

ACT I

KENT. See better, Lear, and let me still remain  
The true blank of thine eye.

LEAR. Now, by Apollo, —

KENT. Now, by Apollo, king,  
Thou swear'st thy gods in vain.

LEAR. O, vassal! miscreant! 160  
[Laying his hand on his sword.]

ALB. }  
CORN. } Dear sir, forbear.

KENT. Do;  
Kill thy physician, and the fee bestow  
Upon the foul disease. Revoke thy doom;  
Or, whilst I can vent clamour from my throat,  
I'll tell thee thou dost evil.

LEAR. Hear me, recreant!  
On thy allegiance, hear me!  
Since thou hast sought to make us break our vow,  
Which we durst never yet, and with strain'd pride  
To come between our sentence and our power, 170  
Which nor our nature nor our place can bear,  
Our potency made good, take thy reward.  
Five days we do allot thee, for provision  
To shield thee from diseases of the world,  
And on the sixth to turn thy hated back

158 *blank*] The white mark forming the bull's eye of the target. Kent  
appeals to Lear to let him remain by him as the mark by which to  
guide the aim of his vision.

170 *power*] *sc.* to carry out our sentence.

172 *Our potency made good*] By way of proving the reality of our authority.

174 *diseases*] troubles, distresses. Thus the Quartos. The Folios read  
*disasters*.

Upon our kingdom: if on the tenth day following  
Thy 'banish'd trunk be found in our dominions,  
The moment is thy death. Away! By Jupiter,  
This shall not be revoked.

KENT. Fare thee well, king: sith thus thou wilt  
appear, 180  
Freedom lives hence, and banishment is here.  
[To Cordelia] The gods to their dear shelter take thee,  
maid,  
That justly think'st and hast most rightly said!  
[To Regan and Goneril] And your large speeches may your  
deeds approve,  
That good effects may spring from words of love.  
Thus Kent, O princes, bids you all adieu;  
He'll shape his old course in a country new. [Exit.

*Flourish. Re-enter GLOUCESTER, with FRANCE, BURGUNDY, and  
Attendants*

GLOU. Here's France and Burgundy, my noble lord.

LEAR. My lord of Burgundy,  
We first address 'towards you, who with this king 190  
Hath rivall'd for our daughter: what, in the least,

176 *tenth*] Thus all the early editions. Some modern editors substitute *seventh*, which suits the context better

181 *Freedom*] Thus the Folios. The Quartos read *Friendship*, perhaps a better antithesis to "banishment."

184 *approve*] prove, make good.

187 *his old course*] his career in old age

188 GLOU. *Here's France . . . lord*] Thus the Quartos. The Folios give the line to CORDELIA.

191 *rivall'd*] competed.

# KING LEAR

ACT I

Will you require in present dower with her,  
Or cease your quest of love?

BUR. Most royal majesty,  
I crave no more than what your highness offer'd,  
Nor will you tender less.

LEAR. Right noble Burgundy,  
When she was dear to us, we did hold her so;  
But now her price is fall'n. Sir, there she stands:  
If aught within that little seeming substance,  
Or all of it, with our displeasure pieced,  
And nothing more, may fitly like your grace,  
She's there, and she is yours. 200

BUR. I know no answer.

LEAR. Will you, with those infirmities she owes,  
Unfriended, new adopted to our hate,  
Dower'd with our curse and stranger'd with our oath,  
Take her, or leave her?

BUR. Pardon me, royal sir;  
Election makes not up on such conditions.

LEAR. Then leave her, sir; for, by the power that  
made me,  
I tell you all her wealth. [*To France*] For you, great king,  
I would not from your love make such a stray,

196 *hold her so*] hold her worthy of a great dowry.

198 *that little seeming substance*] that slight looking body.

199 *pieced*] supplemented.

204 *stranger'd . . . oath*] abjured by us, made a stranger to us, alienated  
from us by oath.

206 *Election makes not up*] Choice makes no decision, no choice is possible

209-210 *I would not . . . To match*] I would not neglect or ignore  
your love to such an extent as to match.

To match you where I hate; therefore beseech you 210  
 To avert your liking a more worthier way  
 Than on a wretch whom nature is ashamed  
 Almost to acknowledge hers.

FRANCE. This is most strange,  
 That she, that even but now was your best object,  
 The argument of your praise, balm of your age,  
 Most best, most dearest, should in this trice of time  
 Commit a thing so monstrous, to dismantle  
 So many folds of favour. Sure, her offence  
 Must be of such unnatural degree  
 That monsters it, or your fore-vouch'd affection 220  
 Fall'n into taint: which to believe of her,  
 Must be a faith that reason without miracle  
 Could never plant in me.

COR. I yet beseech your majesty, —  
 If for I want that glib and oily art,  
 To speak and purpose not, since what I well intend,  
 I'll do't before I speak, — that you make known  
 It is no vicious blot, murder, or foulness,

214 *your best object*] the “delight of your eye”, *best* is omitted from the Folios; *object* stands for “object of attraction” Cf *Mids. N. Dr.* IV, i, 167: “The *object* and the pleasure of mine eye”

215 *argument*] theme.

220–221 *That monsters it, or . . . into taint*] That befits a monster, or as makes it monstrous before your previously professed affection could have suffered taint. The Quartos read *Falne* for which the Folios substitute *Fall*.

227 *It is no vicious blot, murder, or foulness*] Cordelia hyperbolically exaggerates the absurdity of the charges brought against her. She scornfully mentions the worst crimes possible.

# KING LEAR

ACT I

No unchaste action, or dishonour'd step,  
That hath deprived me of your grace and favour;  
But even for want of that for which I am richer, 230  
A still-soliciting eye, and such a tongue  
As I am glad I have not, though not to have it  
Hath lost me in your liking.

LEAR. Better thou

Hadst not been born than not to have pleased me better.

FRANCE. Is it but this? a tardiness in nature  
Which often leaves the history unspoke  
That it intends to do? My lord of Burgundy,  
What say you to the lady? Love's not love  
When it is mingled with regards that stand  
Aloof from the entire point. Will you have her? 240  
She is herself a dowry.

BUR. Royal Lear,

Give but that portion which yourself proposed,  
And here I take Cordelia by the hand,  
Duchess of Burgundy.

LEAR. Nothing: I have sworn; I am firm.

BUR. I am sorry then you have so lost a father  
That you must lose a husband.

COR. Peace be with Burgundy!

Since that respects of fortune are his love,  
I shall not be his wife.

230 *for want . . . richer*] The construction is obscure and the metre is irregular; "for which" must mean "for wanting which."

231 *still-soliciting*] constantly importuning.

239-240 *with regards . . . the entire point*] with scruples which are irrelevant to the essential or main point.

248 *respects*] considerations.

FRANCE. Fairest Cordelia, that art most rich being  
 • poor, 250

Most choice forsaken, and most loved despised,  
 Thee and thy virtues here I seize upon:  
 'Be it lawful I take up what's cast away.  
 Gods, gods! 't is strange that from their cold'st neglect  
 My love should kindle to inflamed respect.  
 Thy dowerless daughter, king, thrown to my chance,  
 Is queen of us, of ours, and our fair France:  
 Not all the dukes of waterish Burgundy  
 Can buy this unprized precious maid of me.  
 Bid them, farewell, Cordelia, though unkind: 260  
 Thou lovest here, a better where to find.

LEAR. Thou hast her, France: let her be thine, for we  
 Have no such daughter, nor shall ever see  
 That face of hers again. Therefore be gone  
 Without our grace, our love, our benison.  
 Come, noble Burgundy.

[*Flourish.* • *Exeunt all but France, Goneril,  
 Regan, and Cordelia.*

FRANCE. Bid farewell to your sisters.

COR. The jewels of our father, with wash'd eyes  
 Cordelia leaves you: I know you what you are;

255 *inflamed respect*] increased regard

258 *waterish*] well-watered.

259 *unprized*] priceless "Unvalued" is similarly used for "invaluable", cf. *Rich III*, I, iv, 27: "*unvalued* jewels"

260 *though unkind*] though they are unkind, though they lack natural affection Cf *III*, iv, 70, *infra*. "his *unkind* daughters"

268 *The jewels*] Thus the early editions, for which Rowe substituted *Ye jewels*.

And, like a sister, am most loath to call 270  
 Your faults as they are named. Use well our father:  
 To your professed bosoms I commit him:  
 But yet, alas, stood I within his grace,  
 I would prefer him to a better place.  
 So farewell to you both.

REG. Prescribe not us our duties.

GON. Let your study  
 Be to content your lord, who hath received you  
 At fortune's alms. You have obedience scanted,  
 And well are worth the want that you have wanted.

COR. Time shall unfold what plaited cunning hides:  
 Who cover faults, at last shame them derides. 281  
 Well may you prosper!

FRANCE. Come, my fair Cordelia.

*[Exeunt France and Cordelia.]*

GON. Sister, it is not a little I have to say of what  
 most nearly appertains to us both. I think our father  
 will hence to-night.

272 *bosoms*] affections Cf. V, iii, 50, *infra*, "the common *bosom*," i. e.,  
 the affection of the common people.

279 *well . . . wanted*] well deserve to suffer the want of that affection  
 (from your husband) which you have shown yourself to be without  
 (for your father) Thus the Folios The Quartos awkwardly read  
*worth the worth for worth the want.*

280 *plaited*] twisted, crafty. The Folios read *plighted* and the Quartos  
*pleated* "Plighted" is frequently found in the sense of "folded."

281 *Who cover . . . derides*] The old editions read *couers* for *cover* which  
 is more grammatical. For *shame them* of the Quartos the Folios  
 substitute *with shame*, which is difficult. The line seems a reminiscence  
 of *Proverbs*, xxviii, 13: "He that *covereth* his sins shall not  
 prosper."

REG. That's most certain, and with you; next month with us.

GON. You see how full of changes his age is; the observation we have made of it hath not been little: he always loved our sister most; and with what poor judgement he hath now cast her off appears too grossly. 291

REG. 'T is the infirmity of his age: yet he hath ever but slenderly known himself.

GON. The best and soundest of his time hath been but rash; then must we look to receive from his age, not alone the imperfections of long ingrafted condition, but therewithal the unruly waywardness that infirm and choleric years bring with them.

REG. Such unconstant starts are we like to have from him as this of Kent's banishment. 300

GON. There is further compliment of leave-taking between France and him. Pray you, let's hit together: if our father carry authority with such dispositions as he bears, this last surrender of his will but offend us.

REG. We shall further think on 't.

GON. We must do something, and i' the heat.

[*Exeunt.*]

291 *grossly*] obviously, manifestly.

294 *The best . . . time*] The period of his life when he was in the prime of his bodily powers

296 *long ingrafted condition*] disposition confirmed by long habit

299 *unconstant starts*] fickle impulses.

302-304 *let's hit together . . . offend us*] let's join together in our course of action, if our father assert his authority in such headstrong temper as he now manifests, this final surrender to us of his kingdom will merely breed trouble for us

306 *i' the heat*] Cf. the proverb "Strike while the iron's hot."



# KING LEAR

## ACT I

### SCENE II — THE EARL OF GLOUCESTER'S CASTLE

*Enter EDMUND, with a letter*

EDM. Thou, nature, art my goddess; to thy law  
My services are bound. Wherefore should I  
Stand in the plague of custom, and permit  
The curiosity of nations to deprive me,  
For that I am some twelve or fourteen moonshines  
Lag of a brother? Why bastard? wherefore base?  
When my dimensions are as well compact,  
My mind as generous and my shape as true,  
As honest madam's issue? Why brand they us  
With base? with baseness? bastardy? base, base? 10'  
Who in the lusty stealth of nature take  
More composition and fierce quality  
Than doth, within a dull, stale, tired bed,  
Go to the creating a whole tribe of fops,

3 *Stand in the plague of custom*] Be subjected to the taint that custom or tradition lays on bastards.

4 *The curiosity . . . deprive me*] The scrupulousness or false delicacy of civilised society to disinherit me.

6 *Lag of a brother*] Lagging behind a brother in years; older than my brother.

*base*] "A base son" was a synonym for "a bastard." The words have no etymological connection. Cf. line 10, *infra*.

7 *my dimensions . . . compact*] my proportions are put together as well.

12 *More composition*] More effective blending.

14 *fops*] fools. Cf. line 113, *infra*: "the excellent *foppery* (*i. e.*, foolishness) of the world," and I, iv, 165, "foppish" (*i. e.*, foolish). Shakespeare also uses the verb "*fop*" in the sense of "dupe," "cheat"; cf. *Othello*, IV, ii, 195.

Got 'tween asleep and wake? Well then,  
 Legitimate Edgar, I must have your land:  
 Our father's love is to the bastard Edmund  
 As to the legitimate: fine word, "legitimate"!  
 Well, my legitimate, if this letter speed  
 And my invention thrive, Edmund the base  
 Shall top the legitimate. I grow; I prosper:  
 Now, gods, stand up for bastards!

20

*Enter GLOUCESTER*

GLOU. Kent banish'd thus! and France in choler  
 parted!  
 And the king gone to-night! subscribed his power!  
 Confined to exhibition! All this done  
 Upon the gad! Edmund, how now! what news?  
 EDM. So please your lordship, none.

*[Putting up the letter.*

GLOU. Why so earnestly seek you to put up that  
 letter?

EDM. I know no news, my lord.

GLOU. What paper were you reading?

30

21 *Shall top the*] Shall get above, surpass the Thus Capell for the old  
 reading *Shall to the*, which has been explained as "Shall come up to  
 the," "get on a level with the."

23 *in choler parted*] departed in anger. There is no evidence in the previ-  
 ous scene (cf. I, i, 301, *supra*), that the King of France and Lear de-  
 parted otherwise than amicably. But the French king is called by  
 Lear "hot-blooded" (II, iv, 211, *infra*).

24 *subscribed*] yielded (by, a written surrender).

25 *Confined to exhibition*] Restricted to an allowance.

26 *Upon the gad*] Upon the spur of the moment.

# KING LEAR

## ACT I

EDM. Nothing, my lord.

GLOU. No? What needed then that terrible dispatch of it into your pocket? the quality of nothing hath not such need to hide itself. Let's see: come, if it be nothing, I shall not need spectacles.

EDM. I beseech you, sir, pardon me: it is a letter from my brother, that I have not all o'er-read; and for so much as I have perused, I find it not fit for your o'er-looking.

GLOU. Give me the letter, sir.

EDM. I shall offend, either to detain or give it. The contents, as in part I understand them, are to blame.

GLOU. Let's see, let's see.

EDM. I hope, for my brother's justification, he wrote this but as an essay or taste of my virtue.

GLOU. [*Reads*] "This policy and reverence of age makes the world bitter to the best of our times; keeps our fortunes from us till our oldness cannot relish them. I begin to find an idle and fond bondage in the oppression of aged tyranny; who sways, not as it hath power, but as it is suffered. Come to me, that of this I may speak more. If our father would sleep till I waked him, you should enjoy half his revenue for ever, and live the beloved of your brother,"

EDGAR."

32 *terrible*] terrifying, implying terror.

38 *for your o'er-looking*] for your observation or inspection. Cf. V, i, 50, *infra*: "I will o'erlook thy paper."

44 *an essay or taste*] a trial or test.

45 *policy and reverence of age*] policy or practice of reverencing age.

46 *to the best of our times*] to the best years of our life. Cf. I, i, 294, *supra*.

47 *fond*] foolish.

Hum! Conspiracy! — “Sleep till I waked him, you should enjoy half his revenue!” — My son Edgar! Had he a hand to write this? a heart and brain to breed it in? When came this to you? who brought it?

EDM. It was not brought me, my lord; there’s the cunning of it; I found it thrown in at the casement of my closet.

GLOU. You know the character to be your brother’s?

EDM. If the matter were good, my lord, I durst <sup>60</sup> swear it were his; but, in respect of that, I would fain think it were not.

GLOU. It is his.

EDM. It is his hand, my lord; but I hope his heart is not in the contents.

GLOU. Hath he never heretofore sounded you in this business?

EDM. Never, my lord: but I have heard him oft maintain it to be fit, that, sons at perfect age, and fathers declining, the father should be as ward to the <sup>70</sup> son, and the son manage his revenue.

GLOU. O villain, villain! His very opinion in the letter! Abhorred villain! Unnatural, detested, brutish villain! worse than brutish! Go, sirrah, seek him; ay, apprehend him: abominable villain! Where is he?

EDM. I do not well know, my lord. If it shall please you to suspend your indignation against my brother till you can derive from him better testimony of his intent,

<sup>59</sup> *character*] handwriting.

<sup>61</sup> *in respect of that*] in view of the fact that the matter is far from good.

you should run a certain course; where, if you violently proceed against him, mistaking his purpose, it would 80 make a great gap in your own honour and shake in pieces the heart of his obedience. I dare pawn down, my life for him that he hath wrote this to feel my affection to your honour and to no further pretence of danger.

GLOU. Think you so?

EDM. If your honour judge it meet, I will place you where you shall hear us confer of this, and by an auricular assurance have your satisfaction, and that without any further delay than this very evening.

GLOU. He cannot be such a monster — 90

EDM. Nor is not, sure.

GLOU. To his father, that so tenderly and entirely loves him. Heaven and earth! Edmund, seek him out; wind me into him, I pray you: frame the business after your own wisdom. I would unstate myself, to be in a due resolution.

EDM. I will seek him, sir, presently, convey the business as I shall find means, and acquaint you withal.

---

79 *a certain course, where*] a safe or secure course; \*whereas

84 *pretence of danger*] dangerous purpose or design

91-93 *Nor is not . . . Heaven and earth*] These words only appear in the Quartos. They are omitted from the Folios. It has been argued that Gloucester's professions of affection for his son are hardly in keeping with his readiness to condemn him, and are best omitted.

94 *wind me into him*] steal or insinuate yourself into his confidence; "me" is the ethic dative

95-96 *I would unstate . . . resolution*] I would give up my rank and estate in order to assure myself (of the facts).

97 *convey*] tactfully manage.

GLOU. These late eclipses in the sun and moon portend no good to us: though the wisdom of nature can reason it thus and thus, yet nature finds itself scourged by the sequent effects: love cools, friendship falls off, brothers divide: in cities, mutinies; in countries, discord; in palaces, treason; and the bond cracked 'twixt son and father. This villain of mine comes under the prediction; there's son against father: the king falls from bias of nature; there's father against child. We have seen the best of our time: machinations, hollow-ness, treachery and all ruinous disorders follow us disquietly to our graves. Find out this villain, Edmund; it shall lose thee nothing; do it carefully. And the noble and true-hearted Kent banished! his offence, honesty! 'Tis strange. [Exit. 112

EDM. This is the excellent foppery of the world, that when we are sick in fortune — often the surfeit of our

99-100 *These late eclipses . . . portend no good*] Eclipses were almost universally held at the time to foreshadow calamity.

100-102 *though the wisdom . . . sequent effects*] though natural science or philosophy can account for these eclipses on scientific grounds, yet there is no mistaking their calamitous consequences

105-109 *This villain . . . graves*] This passage is only in the Folios. It is omitted from the Quartos

106-107 *falls from bias of nature*] runs counter to his natural disposition; "bias" is strictly the piece of lead which diverts the bowl from the straight course.

113 *foppery*] folly. See note on line 14, *supra*. Edmund in his cynical misanthropy condemns as an empty superstition the current faith in astrology.

114 *the surfeit*] the morbid excesses.

own behaviour — we make guilty of our disasters the sun, the moon and the stars: as if we were villains by necessity, fools by heavenly compulsion; knaves, thieves and treachers, by spherical predominance; drunkards, liars and adulterers, by an enforced obedience of planetary influence; and all that we are evil in, by a divine thrusting on: an admirable evasion of whoremaster man, to lay his goatish disposition to the charge of a star! My father compounded with my mother under the dragon's tail, and my nativity was under Ursa major; so that it follows I am rough and lecherous. Tut, I should have been that I am, had the maidenliest star in the firmament twinkled on my bastardizing. Edgar —

127

*Enter* EDGAR

And pat he comes like the catastrophe of the old comedy: my cue is villanous melancholy, with a sigh like Tom o'

118 *treachers*] traitors. Thus the Folios. The Quartos read *Trecherers*. The form "treacher" or "treachour" is not uncommon.

*spherical predominance*] an astrological term meaning much the same as planetary influence (line 119, *infra*).

120-121 *a divine thrusting on*] a supernatural impulse.

125 *Tut*] Thus Jennens. The Quartos read *Fut, i. e.*, "God's foot." The Folios omit the word

128 *pat he comes . . . old comedy*] In the crude comedies of an old date the catastrophe was brought about in defiance of the natural order of things by the entry of a dominant character in quite unjustifiable circumstances. Cf. the "deus ex machina" of Horace's *Ars Poetica*, 191-192.

129-130 *Tom o' Bedlam*] A mad beggar-man, 'a half-witted vagrant; cf. "Bedlam beggars" II, iii, 14, *infra*, and note, and III, vii, 102.

Bedlam. O, these eclipses do portend these divisions!  
fa, sol, la, mi.

131

EDG. How now, brother Edmund! what serious contemplation are you in?

• EDM. I am thinking, brother, of a prediction I read this other day, what should follow these eclipses.

EDG. Do you busy yourself about that?

EDM. I promise you, the effects he writ of succeed unhappily; as of unnaturalness between the child and the parent; death, dearth, dissolutions of ancient amities; divisions in state, menaces and maledictions against king and nobles; needless diffidences, banishment of friends, dissipation of cohorts, nuptial breaches, and I know not what.

EDG. How long have you been a sectary astronomical?

EDM. Come, come; when saw you my father last?

EDG. Why, the night gone by.

130 *divisions*] schisms, disunion with a quibbling suggestion of the word in the different sense of "musical modulations."

131 *fa . . mi*] Edmund sings superciliously some notes of the scale. The words are omitted from the Quartos

137-138 *succeed unhappily*] have bad results

138-144 *as of . . Come, come*] This passage is only found in the Quartos, and is often treated as a spurious interpolation.

141 *diffidences*] breaches of confidence

141-142 *dissipation of cohorts*] dispersal or dissolution of parties, societies, companionships. The phrase is difficult, and neither substantive is used by Shakespeare elsewhere. "Cohort" has no military significance here; it can only mean a band of persons united in any common cause.

143 *a sectary astronomical*] a devotee of astronomy.



# KING LEAR

## ACT I

EDM. Spake you with him?

EDG. Ay, two hours together.

EDM. Parted you in good terms? Found you no displeasure in him by word or countenance?

EDG. None at all.

150

EDM. Bethink yourself wherein you may have offended him: and at my entreaty forbear his presence till some little time hath qualified the heat of his displeasure, which at this instant so rageth in him that with the mischief of your person it would scarcely allay.

EDG. Some villain hath done me wrong.

EDM. That's my fear. I pray you, have a continent forbearance till the speed of his rage goes slower, and, as I say, retire with me to my lodging, from whence I will fitly bring you to hear my lord speak: pray ye, go; there's my key: if you do stir abroad, go armed.

161

EDG. Armed, brother!

EDM. Brother, I advise you to the best: go armed: I am no honest man if there be any good meaning towards you: I have told you what I have seen and heard; but faintly, nothing like the image and horror of it: pray you, away.

EDG. Shall I hear from you anon?

154-155 *that with . . . allay*] that with injury done your person it would scarcely subside.

157-163 *That's my fear . . . Brother, I advise you*] Thus the Folios. The Quartos omit the whole passage, between the words *That's my fear* and *Brother I advise you*.

157-158 *have a continent forbearance*] keep a well-controlled distance, a restrained aloofness, deliberately keep away (from him). Cf. line 152, *supra*: "*forbear his presence*."

EDM. I do serve you in this business. [*Exit Edgar.*  
 A credulous father, and a brother noble, 170  
 Whose nature is so far from doing harms  
 That he suspects none; on whose foolish honesty  
 My practices ride easy. I see the business.  
 Let me, if not by birth, have lands by wit:  
 All with me's meet that I can fashion fit. [*Exit.*

## SCENE III — THE DUKE OF ALBANY'S PALACE

*Enter GONERIL and OSWALD, her steward*

GON. Did my father strike my gentleman for chiding  
 of his fool?

OSW. Yes, madam.

GON. By day and night he wrongs me; every hour  
 He flashes into one gross crime or other,  
 That sets us all at odds: I'll not endure it:  
 His knights grow riotous, and himself upbraids us  
 On every trifle. When he returns from hunting,  
 I will not speak with him; say I am sick:  
 If you come slack of former services, 10  
 You shall do well; the fault of it I'll answer.

173 *practices*] machinations, plots.

175 *All with me's meet . . . fit*] With me every device which I can adapt  
 to my purpose is fair game.

4 *By day and night*] Every hour.

5 *flashes*] breaks out. Cf. *Hamlet*, II, i, 33: "The *flash* and outbreak of  
 a fiery mind."

# KING LEAR

## ACT I

Osw. He's coming, madam; I hear him.

[*Horns within.*]

GON. Put on what weary negligence you please,  
You and your fellows; I'd have it come to question;  
If he distaste it, let him to our sister,  
Whose mind and mine, I know, in that are one,  
Not to be over-ruled. Idle old man,  
That still would manage those authorities  
That he hath given away! Now, by my life,  
Old fools are babes again, and must be used 20  
With checks as flatteries, when they are seen abused.  
Remember what I tell you.

Osw. Very well, madam.

GON. And let his knights have colder looks among  
you;

What grows of it, no matter; advise your fellows so:  
I would breed from hence occasions, and I shall,  
That I may speak: I'll write straight to my sister,  
To hold my very course. Prepare for dinner. [*Exeunt.*]

13 *weary negligence*] listless inattentiveness. Cf I, iv, 67, *infra*.

15 *distaste*] Thus the Folios. The Quartos read more simply *dislike*.

17-21 *Not to be over-ruled . . . seen abused*] These lines are omitted from the Folios, and appear as prose in the Quartos. Line 21 (*With checks . . . abused*) means: With punishments or restrictions in the place of flatteries, when they (*i.e.*, the old fools) are seen to be misled or deceived (as to the true position of affairs)

25-26 *I would breed . . . speak*] These words which are also printed as prose in the Quartos are again omitted from the Folios.

## SCENE IV — A HALL IN THE SAME

*Enter KENT, disguised*

KENT. If but as well I other accents borrow,  
That can my speech defuse, my good intent  
May carry through itself to that full issue  
For which I razed my likeness. Now, banish'd Kent,  
If thou canst serve where thou dost stand condemn'd,  
So may it come, thy master whom thou lovest  
Shall find thee full of labours.

*Horns within. Enter LEAR, Knights, and Attendants*

LEAR. Let me not stay a jot for dinner; go get it ready. [*Exit an Attendant.*] How now! what art thou?

KENT. A man, sir.

10

LEAR. What dost thou profess? What wouldst thou with us?

KENT. I do profess to be no less than I seem; to serve him truly that will put me in trust; to love him that is honest; to converse with him that is wise and says little; to fear judgement; to fight when I cannot choose, and to eat no fish.

2 *defuse*] disorder, confuse. Kent is anxious to complete his disguise by adopting an accent which shall make his speech indistinct

7 *full of labours*] ready for any service

16 *to fear judgement*] to fear the day of judgment

17 *to eat no fish*] Eating fish was held to be the sign of a Roman Catholic, of one disaffected to the government Hence "to eat no fish" is equivalent to a profession of loyalty and orthodoxy. Cf. Marston's

# KING LEAR

ACT I

LEAR. What art thou?

KENT. A very honest-hearted fellow, and as poor as  
the king. 20

LEAR. If thou be as poor for a subject as he is for a  
king, thou art poor enough. What wouldst thou? •

KENT. Service.

LEAR. Who wouldst thou serve?

KENT. You.

LEAR. Dost thou know me, fellow?

KENT. No, sir; but you have that in your countenance  
which I would fain call master.

LEAR. What's that?

KENT. Authority. 30

LEAR. What services canst thou do?

KENT. I can keep honest counsel, ride, run, mar a  
curious tale in telling it, and deliver a plain message  
bluntly: that which ordinary men are fit for, I am quali-  
fied in, and the best of me is diligence.

LEAR. How old art thou?

KENT. Not so young, sir, to love a woman for singing,  
nor so old to dote on her for any thing: I have years  
on my back forty eight.

LEAR. Follow me; thou shalt serve me: if I like thee 40  
no worse after dinner, I will not part from thee yet.  
Dinner, ho, dinner! Where's my knave? my fool? Go  
you, and call my fool hither. [Exit an Attendant.]

*Dutch Courtesan*, I, ii, 19-20: "I trust I am none of the wicked that  
*eat fish a' Fridays*."

33 *curious*] elaborate, complex.

42 *knave*] lad; a common term of endearment, frequently used by Lear.

*Enter OSWALD*

You, you, sirrah, where's my daughter?

• OSW. So please you, — *[Exit.*

• LEAR. What says the fellow there? Call the clotpoll back. *[Exit a Knight.]* Where's my fool, ho? I think the world's asleep.

*Re-enter Knight*

How now! where's that mongrel?

KNIGHT. He says, my lord, your daughter is not well. 50

LEAR. Why came not the slave back to me when I called him?

KNIGHT. Sir, he answered me in the roundest manner, he would not.

LEAR. He would not!

KNIGHT. My lord, I know not what the matter is; but, to my judgement, your highness is not entertained with that ceremonious affection as you were wont; there's a great abatement of kindness appears as well in the general dependants as in the duke himself also 60 and your daughter.

LEAR. Ha! sayest thou so?

KNIGHT. I beseech you, pardon me, my lord, if I be mistaken; for my duty cannot be silent when I think your highness wronged.

LEAR. Thou but rememberest me of mine own conception: I have perceived a most faint neglect of late;

---

46 *clotpoll*] clodpate, blockhead.

53 *roundest*] bluntest.

67 *faint*] listless, languid. Cf. I, iii, 13, *supra*, "weary negligence."

# KING LEAR

ACT I

which I have rather blamed as mine own jealous curiosity than as a very pretence and purpose of unkindness: I will look further into't. But where's my fool? 70 I have not seen him this two days.

KNIGHT. Since my young lady's going into France, sir, the fool hath much pined away.

LEAR. No more of that; I have noted it well. Go you, and tell my daughter I would speak with her. [Exit an Attendant.] Go you, call hither my fool.

[Exit an Attendant.]

Re-enter OSWALD

O, you sir, you, come you hither, sir: who am I, sir? . .

OSW. My lady's father.

LEAR. My lady's father! my lord's knave: you whore-son dog! you slave! you cur! 80

OSW. I am none of these, my lord; I beseech your pardon.

LEAR. Do you bandy looks with me, you rascal?

[Striking him.]

OSW. I'll not be struck, my lord.

KENT. Nor tripped neither, you base foot-ball player.

[Tripping up his heels.]

LEAR. I thank thee, fellow; thou servest me, and I'll love thee.

KENT. Come, sir, arise, away! I'll teach you differ-

68-69 *mine own jealous . . . very pretence*] my own suspicious punctiliousness than as a deliberate design.

88 *differences*] differences of rank between master and man.

## SCENE IV

## KING LEAR

ences: away, away! If you will measure your lubber's length again, tarry: but away! go to; have you wisdom? so. *[Pushes Oswald out.]*

LEAR. Now, my friendly knave, I thank thee: there's earnest of thy service. *[Giving Kent money.]*

*Enter Fool*

FOOL. Let me hire him too: here's my coxcomb.

*[Offering Kent his cap.]*

LEAR. How now, my pretty knave! how dost thou?

FOOL. Sirrah, you were best take my coxcomb.

KENT. Why, fool?

97

FOOL. Why, for taking one's part that's out of favour: nay, an thou canst not smile as the wind sits, thou'lt catch cold shortly: there, take my coxcomb: why, this fellow hath banished two on's daughters, and done the third a blessing against his will; if thou follow him, thou must needs wear my coxcomb. How now, nuncle! Would I had two coxcombs and two daughters!

LEAR. Why, my boy?

FOOL. If I gave them all my living, I'd keep my coxcombs myself. There's mine; beg another of thy daughters.

LEAR. Take heed, sirrah; the whip.

109

FOOL. Truth's a dog must to kennel; he must be

93 *earnest*] earnest money, payment in advance.

94 *coxcomb*] the fool's cap.

103 *nuncle*] a contraction of "mine uncle." Fools usually addressed their superiors thus.



# KING LEAR

## ACT I

whipped out, when Lady the brach may stand by the fire and stink.

LEAR. A pestilent gall to me!

FOOL. Sirrah, I'll teach thee a speech.

LEAR. Do.

FOOL. Mark it, nuncle:

Have more than thou showest,  
 Speak less than thou knowest,  
 Lend less than thou owest,  
 Ride more than thou goest,  
 Learn more than thou trowest,  
 Set less than thou throwest;  
 Leave thy drink and thy whore,  
 And keep in-a-door,  
 And thou shalt have more  
 Than two tens to a score.

120

KENT. This is nothing, fool.

FOOL. Then 't is like the breath of an unfee'd lawyer, you gave me nothing for't. Can you make no use of nothing, nuncle?

130

111 *Lady the brach*] a bitch hound. Thus Steevens. The Folios read *the Lady Brach*; the Quartos *Lady oth'e brach*. Cf. *1 Hen. IV*, III, i, 237: "I'd rather hear *Lady my brach* howl in Irish." For "*brach*," see III, vi, 68, *infra*.

119 *owest*] ownest, possessest.

120 *goest*] walkest on foot.

121 *trowest*] trustest, believest. The line means "Hear or learn more than you believe; don't believe all you hear." "Trow" is found in the sense both of "believe" and "know." But here the former sense suits the context.

122 *Set less than thou throwest*] A confused way of saying "Keep something in reserve when you stake a throw of the dice."

## SCENE IV

## KING LEAR

LEAR. Why, no, boy; nothing can be made out of nothing.

FOOL. [*To Kent*] Prithee, tell him, so much the rent of his land comes to: he will not believe a fool.

LEAR. A bitter fool!

FOOL. Dost thou know the difference, my boy, between a bitter fool and a sweet fool?

LEAR. No, lad; teach me.

FOOL.	That lord that counsell'd thee	
	To give away thy land,	140
	Come place him here by me;	
	Do thou for him stand:	
	The sweet and bitter fool	
	Will presently appear;	
	The one in motley here,	
	The other found out there.	

LEAR. Dost thou call me fool, boy?

FOOL. All thy other titles thou hast given away; that thou wast born with.

KENT. This is, not altogether fool, my lord. 150

FOOL. No, faith, lords and great men will not let me; if I had a monopoly out, they would have part on't:

139-154 *That lord . . . they'll be snatching*] This passage is omitted from the Folios.

139 *That lord that counsell'd thee*] In the old play of *King Lear*, Lear is advised by a lord called Scalliger to divide his kingdom among his children. No such counsellor figures in Shakespeare's piece.

145 *motley*] the ordinary parti-coloured dress of the domestic fool.

152 *if I had a monopoly out*] if a patent of monopoly (in folly) had been granted me.

# KING LEAR

## ACT I

and ladies too, they will not let me have all the fool to myself; they'll be snatching. Give me an egg, nuncle, and I'll give thee two crowns.

LEAR. What two crowns shall they be? 156

FOOL. Why, after I have cut the egg in the middle and eat up the meat, the two crowns of the egg. When thou clovest thy crown i' the middle and gavest away both parts, thou borest thine ass on thy back o'er the dirt: thou hadst little wit in thy bald crown when thou gavest thy golden one away. If I speak like myself in this, let him be whipped that first finds it so.

[*Singing*]      Fools had ne'er less wit in a year;  
                     For wise men are grown foppish,  
                     And know not how their wits to wear,  
                     Their manners are so apish.

LEAR. When were you wont to be so full of songs, sirrah? 169

FOOL. I have used it, nuncle, ever since thou madest thy daughters thy mother: for when thou gavest them the rod and puttest down thine own breeches,

153 *ladies too*] Thus some copies of the First Quarto, though most copies read with the Second and Third Quartos *and lodes too*.

160 *borest thine ass . . . back*] An allusion to Æsop's fable of the old man who tried to please everybody.

162 *like myself*] like a fool. The fool means that he is in earnest.

164-165 *Fools . . . foppish*] Fools never at any time enjoyed less recognition; for wise men are grown foolish. For "foppish" see *supra*, I, ii, 14, "fops," and 113, "foppery" (*i. e.*, foolishness).

170 *I have used it*] It has been my use or habit.

[*Singing*]           Then they for sudden joy did weep,  
                           And I for sorrow sung,  
                           That such a king should play bo-peep,  
                           And go the fools among

Prithee, nuncle, keep a schoolmaster that can teach thy fool to lie: I would fain learn to lie.

LEAR. An you lie, sirrah, we'll have you whipped. 179

FOOL. I marvel what kin thou and thy daughters are: they'll have me whipped for speaking true, thou'lt have me whipped for lying, and sometimes I am whipped for holding my peace. I had rather be any kind o' thing than a fool: and yet I would not be thee, nuncle; thou hast pared thy wit o' both sides and left nothing i' the middle. Here comes one o' the parings.

*Enter GONERIL*

LEAR. How now, daughter! what makes that frontlet on? Methinks you are too much of late i' the frown. 189

FOOL. Thou wast a pretty fellow when thou hadst no need to care for her frowning; now thou art an O with-

173-176 *Then they . . . among*] A similar stanza ending:

“Some men for sudden joy gan weep  
       But I for sorrow sing,”

is sung in Thomas Heywood's *Rape of Lucrece*, 1608 Heywood probably imitated Shakespeare here.

175 *play bo-peep*] play childish games

187\* *frontlet*] properly a tight band worn on women's foreheads, but here an incipient frown Cf. *Zepheria* (1594), a collection of sonnets, xxvii,

14: “And veil thy face with frowns as with a frontlet.”

191-192 *an O without a figure*] a cipher.

out a figure: I am better than thou art now; I am a fool, thou art nothing. [*To Gon.*] Yes, forsooth, I will hold my tongue; so your face bids me, though you say nothing.

Mum, mum:

He that keeps nor crust nor crumb,

Weary of all, shall want some.

[*Pointing to Lear*] That's a shealed peascod.

GON. Not only, sir, this your all-licensed fool,

But other of your insolent retinue

200

Do hourly carp and quarrel, breaking forth

In rank and not to be endured riots. Sir,

I had thought, by making this well known unto you,

To have found a safe redress; but now grow fearful,

By what yourself too late have spoke and done,

That you protect this course and put it on

By your allowance; which if you should, the fault

Would not 'scape censure, nor the redresses sleep,

Which, in the tender of a wholesome weal,

Might in their working do you that offence

210

197 *Weary of all*] Rejecting from ennui all sustenance.

198 *a shealed peascod*] an empty husk, or pod without the peas; "shealed" is the old spelling of "shelled."

206-207 *put it on . . . allowance*] prompt or encourage it by your approval.

207-212 *which if you should . . . proceeding*] The construction is confused. The lines mean: Encouragement of this disorder on your part is a fault inviting censure, nor will needful remedial measures be spared; such measures, undertaken for the due care and protection of a healthy court or state, might in their operation do you an injury, which injury it would in other circumstances be reprehensible to inflict on you, but will in the necessities of the case be reckoned a prudent or discreet procedure.

Which else were shame, that then necessity  
Will call discreet proceeding.

FOOL. For, you know, nuncle,

The hedge-sparrow fed the cuckoo so long,  
That it had it head bit off by it young

So out went the candle, and we were left darkling.

LEAR. Are you our daughter?

GON. Come, sir,

I would you would make use of that good wisdom  
Whereof I know you are fraught, and put away 220  
These dispositions that of late transform you  
From what you rightly are.

FOOL. May not an ass know when the cart draws the  
horse? Whoop, Jug! I love thee.

LEAR. Doth any here know me? This is not Lear:  
Doth Lear walk thus? speak thus? Where are his eyes?  
Either his notion weakens, his discernings  
Are lethargied — Ha! waking? 't is not so.  
Who is it that can tell me who I am?

215 *it head . . . it young*] in both cases “it” is the old form of “its.”  
The lines refer to the cuckoo’s habit of laying her eggs in the spar-  
row’s nest. The sparrow is wont to hatch and nurture the cuckoo’s  
chicks, though they when they grow up often kill the bird which has  
cherished them

216 *darkling*] in the dark. The line is probably a colloquial catch-phrase  
221 *dispositions*] humours, caprices (Cf line 292, *infra*)

224 *Whoop, Jug! I love thee*] Possibly the burden of an old song. “Jug”  
was the pet name for Joan.

227 *notion . . . discernings*] mind . . . understanding  
*weakens*] Thus the Folios. The Quartos read *weakness*.

FOOL. Lear's shadow. 230

LEAR. I would learn that; for, by the marks of sovereignty, knowledge and reason, I should be false persuaded I had daughters.

FOOL. Which they will make an obedient father.

LEAR. Your name, fair gentlewoman?

GON. This admiration, sir, is much o' the savour  
Of other your new pranks. I do beseech you  
To understand my purposes aright:  
As you are old and reverend, you should be wise.  
Here do you keep a hundred knights and squires; 240  
Men so disorder'd, so debosh'd and bold,  
That this our court, infected with their manners,  
Shows like a riotous inn: epicurism and lust  
Make it more like a tavern or a brothel  
Than a graced palace. The shame itself doth speak  
For instant remedy: be then desired

231-234 *I would learn . . . father*] These lines are only found in the Quartos. Their genuineness has been disputed. "Marks of sovereignty . . . daughters" would seem to mean "evidence offered by the sovereign powers of knowledge and reason would delude me into the belief that I was the father of daughters" Lear ignores the Fool's interruption "Lear's shadow," line 230, and the Fool retaliates by ignoring Lear's interpolated sentences, and by continuing his comment in line 234, "Which . . . father."

236 *This admiration*] This expression of astonishment.

239 *you should*] Thus the Second and Third Quartos. Other early editions omit *you*. Steevens would omit *you should*, and thus improve the metre

241 *debosh'd*] an old spelling of "debauched."

243 *epicurism*] gluttony. Cf. *Macb.*, V, iii, 8: "the English *epicures*."

245 *graced*] dignified, decorous.

By her that else will take the thing she begs  
 A little to disquantity your train,  
 And the remainder that shall still depend,  
 To be such men as may besort your age,  
 Which know themselves and you.

250

LEAR. Darkness and devils!  
 Saddle my horses; call my train together.  
 Degenerate bastard! I'll not trouble thee:  
 Yet have I left a daughter.

GON. You strike my people, and your disorder'd  
 rabble  
 Make servants of their betters.

*Enter ALBANY*

LEAR. Woe, that too late repents, — [To Alb.] O,  
 sir, are you come?  
 Is it your will? Speak, sir. Prepare my horses.  
 Ingratitude, thou marble-hearted fiend,  
 More hideous when thou show'st thee in a child  
 Than the sea-monster!

260

ALB. Pray, sir, be patient.

LEAR. [To Gon.] Detested kite! thou liest.  
 My train are men of choicè and rarest parts,  
 That all particulars of duty know,  
 And in the most exact regard support

248 *disquantity*] diminish the quantity of. Cf line 283, *infra*, "dis-natured."

249 *still depend*] still be your dependants, still continue in your service  
 Cf *Troil. and Cress.*, III, i, 5. "I do *depend* upon (i e, serve) the Lord "

261 *the sea-monster*] a vague reference to the sea-monster described in  
 Ovid's *Metam.*, xi, 199, *seq.*, to which reference is made in *Merch. of*  
*Ven.*, III, ii, 55-57, and note.



# KING LEAR

## ACT I

The worships of their name. O most small fault,  
 How ugly didst thou in Cordelia show!  
 That, like an engine, wrench'd my frame of nature  
 From the fix'd place, drew from my heart all love  
 And added to the gall. O Lear, Lear, Lear! '270  
 Beat at this gate, that let thy folly in [*Striking his head.*]  
 And thy dear judgement out! Go, go, my people.  
 ALB. My lord, I am guiltless, as I am ignorant  
 Of what hath moved you.

LEAR. It may be so, my lord.  
 Hear, nature, hear; dear goddess, hear!  
 Suspend thy purpose, if thou didst intend  
 To make this creature fruitful:  
 Into her womb convey sterility:  
 Dry up in her the organs of increase,  
 And from her derogate body never spring 280  
 A babe to honour her! If she must teem,  
 Create her child of spleen, that it may live  
 And be a thwart disnatur'd torment to her.  
 Let it stamp wrinkles in her brow of youth;  
 With cadent tears fret channels in her cheeks;  
 Turn all her mother's pains and benefits

266 *The worships*] The honourable repute. Such a plural is often met with.

268 *like an engine*] like the rack.

280 *derogate*] degenerate or degraded

283 *thwart disnatur'd*] perverse, lacking natural affection or instinct.

285 *cadent*] falling; a rare Latinism. Thus the Folios; the Quartos read hardly intelligibly *accent* or *accient*.

286 *mother's pains and benefits*] maternal anxieties and kind offices rendered by mothers to children.

To laughter and contempt; that she may feel  
 How sharper than a serpent's tooth it is  
 To have a thankless child! Away, away! [Exit. 290]  
 · ALB. Now, gods that we adore, whereof comes this?  
 · GON. Never afflict yourself to know the cause,  
 But let his disposition have that scope  
 That dotage gives it.

*Re-enter LEAR*

LEAR. What, fifty of my followers at a clap!  
 Within a fortnight!

ALB. What's the matter, sir?

LEAR. I'll tell thee. *[To Gon.]* Life and death!

I am ashamed

That thou hast power to shake my manhood thus;  
 That these hot tears, which break from me perforce,  
 Should make thee worth them. Blasts and fogs upon  
 thee!

The untented woundings of a father's curse 300  
 Pierce every sense about thee! Old fond eyes,  
 Beweep this cause again, I'll pluck ye out  
 And cast you with the waters that you lose  
 To temper clay. Yea, is it come to this?  
 Let it be so: yet have I left a daughter,

292 *disposition*] caprice Cf. line 221, *supra*.

294 *at a clap*] at a stroke.

300 *untented*] not to be healed, incapable of yielding to the surgeon's curative "tent" or probe.

305 *Let . . . daughter*] The Quartos omit *Let it be so*: which is only in the Folios Yet *have I left a daughter* is the Quarto reading for the Folio *I have another daughter*.

# KING LEAR

## ACT I

Who, I am sure, is kind and comfortable:  
 When she shall hear this of thee, with her nails ·  
 She 'll flay thy wolvisish visage. Thou shalt find  
 That I'll resume the shape which thou dost think ·  
 I have cast off for ever: thou shalt, I warrant thee. ' 310

[*Exeunt Lear, Kent, and Attendants.*]

GON. Do you mark that, my lord?

ALB. I cannot be so partial, Goneril,  
 To the great love I bear you, —

GON. Pray you, content. What, Oswald, ho!  
 [*To the Fool*] You, sir, more knave than fool, after your  
 master.

FOOL. Nuncle Lear, nuncle Lear, tarry; take the fool  
 with thee.

A fox, when one has caught her,  
 And such a daughter,  
 Should sure to the slaughter, 320  
 If my cap would buy a halter:  
 So the fool follows after. [*Exit.*]

GON. This man hath had good counsel: a hundred  
 knights!  
 'T is politic and safe to let him keep  
 At point a hundred knights: yes, that on every dream,

306 *comfortable*] comforting, giving comfort or sympathy.

322 *after*] The Elizabethans pronounced this word much like "slaughter"  
 and "halter," words with which it rhymes here

323-334 *This . . . unfitness, —*] These lines are omitted from the  
 Quartos.

325 *At point*] Equipped.

Each buzz, each fancy, each complaint, dislike,  
 He may enguard his dotage with their powers  
 And hold our lives in mercy. Oswald, I say!

. ALB. Well, you may fear too far.

. GON. Safer than trust too far:

Let me still take away the harms I fear, 330  
 Not fear still to be taken: I know his heart.  
 What he hath utter'd I have writ my sister:  
 If she sustain him and his hundred knights,  
 When I have show'd the unfitness, —

*Re-enter OSWALD*

How now, Oswald!

What, have you writ that letter to my sister?

Osw. Yes, madam.

GON. Take you some company, and away to horse:  
 Inform her full of my particular fear,  
 And thereto add such reasons of your own  
 As may compact it more. Get you gone; 340  
 And hasten your return. [*Exit Oswald.*] No, no, my lord,  
 This milky gentleness and course of yours  
 Though I condemn not, yet, under pardon,  
 You are much more attask'd for want of wisdom  
 Than praised for harmful mildness.

326 *buzz*] vague rumour, undertone of gossip

331 *Not fear . . . taken*] Nor constantly fear to be overtaken by harms.

340 *compact it more*] strengthen it

344 *attask'd*] (to be) taken to task, reproved. Thus some copies of the  
 First Quarto. The word is found nowhere else Other copies of the  
 First Quarto with the Second and Third Quartos read *adapt*. The

# KING LEAR

## ACT I

ALB. How far your eyes may pierce I cannot tell:  
Striving to better, oft we mar what's well.

GON. Nay, then —

ALB. Well, well; the event. [*Exeunt.*]

### SCENE V — COURT BEFORE THE SAME

*Enter LEAR, KENT, and Fool*

LEAR. Go you before to Gloucester with these letters.  
Acquaint my daughter no further with any thing you  
know than comes from her demand out of the letter. If  
your diligence be not speedy, I shall be there afore you.

KENT. I will not sleep, my lord, till I have delivered  
your letter. [*Exit.*]

FOOL. If a man's brains were in 's heels, were't not  
in danger of kibes?

LEAR. Ay, boy.

FOOL. Then, I prithee, be merry; thy wit shall ne'er 10  
go slipshod.

---

Folios have *at task*. The unknown word *alapt* may be connected  
with "alapat," which appears in Melton's *Sixfold Politician* (1609,  
page 185): "not with a wand to *alapat* and strike them."

349 *the event*] (we'll wait to see) how it turns out.

SCENE V, 4 *there*] at Gloucester; see line 1. The Duke of Cornwall  
and Lear's daughter Regan are supposed to reside at Gloucester, and  
the Earl of Gloucester to have in the neighbourhood of the city, a  
castle, where the next two scenes take place.

8 *kibes*] chilblains.

10-11 *thy wit . . . slipshod*] "slipshod" means "in slippers," the natural  
footgear for sore heels. The Fool means that Lear has no brains, and

LEAR. Ha, ha, ha!

FOOL. Shalt see thy other daughter will use thee kindly; for though she's as like this as a crab's like an apple, yet I can tell what I can tell.

• LEAR. Why, what canst thou tell, my boy?

FOOL. She will taste as like this as a crab does to a crab. Thou canst tell why one's nose stands i' the middle on 's face?

LEAR. No.

20

FOOL. Why, to keep one's eyes of either side's nose, that what a man cannot smell out he may spy into.

LEAR. I did her wrong —

FOOL. Canst tell how an oyster makes his shell?

• LEAR. No.

FOOL. Nor I neither; but I can tell why a snail has a house.

LEAR. Why?

FOOL. Why, to put's head in; not to give it away to his daughters, and leave his horns without a case. 30

LEAR. I will forget my nature. — So kind a father! — Be my horses ready?

FOOL. Thy asses are gone about 'em. The reason why the seven stars are no more than seven is a pretty reason.

in virtue of his quibbling association of brains with sore heels, he denies that Lear will have any need of invalid shoes

14 *crab*] The "crabapple," commonly called "crab," had a very sour taste

23 *I did her wrong*] Lear refers to his treatment of Cordelia.

34 *the seven stars*] the Pleiades. Cf. *1 Hen. IV*, I, ii, 13: "the moon and the seven stars."

# KING LEAR

ACT I

LEAR. Because they are not eight?

FOOL. Yes, indeed: thou wouldst make a good fool.

LEAR. To take 't again perforce! Monster ingratitude!

FOOL. If thou wert my fool, nuncle, I'd have thee beaten for being old before thy time.

LEAR. How's that?

40

FOOL. Thou shouldst not have been old till thou hadst been wise.

LEAR. O, let me not be mad, not mad, sweet heaven!

Keep me in temper: I would not be mad!

*Enter Gentleman*

How now! are the horses ready?

GENT. Ready, my lord.

LEAR. Come, boy.

FOOL. She that's a maid now and laughs at my departure

Shall not be a maid long, unless things be cut shorter.

*[Exeunt.]*

---

37 *To take 't again perforce]* No doubt Lear is meditating a forcible resumption of his royal power.

48-49 *She that's . . . cut shorter]* The Quartos make Lear go out before the fool speaks this couplet, which many critics regard as an actor's interpolation.

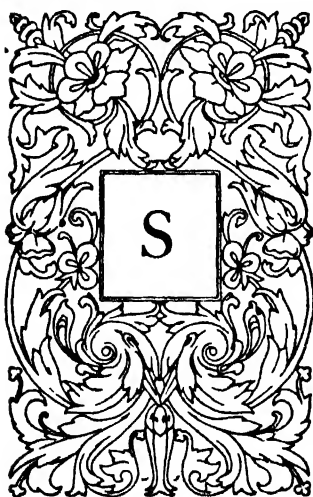


## ACT SECOND — SCENE I

### THE EARL OF GLOUCESTER'S CASTLE

*Enter EDMUND and CURAN, meeting*

EDMUND



AVE THEE, CURAN.

CUR. And you, sir. I have been with your father, and given him notice that the Duke of Cornwall and Regan his duchess will be here with him this night.

EDM. How comes that?

CUR. Nay, I know not. You have heard of the news abroad, I mean the whispered ones, for they are yet but ear-kissing arguments?

EDM. Not I: pray you, what are they?

CUR. Have you heard of no likely wars toward, 'twixt 10 the 'Dukes of Cornwall and Albany?

8 *ear-kissing arguments*] expressions that lightly touch the ear, topics merely spoken of in an undertone. Thus the Folios The Quartos read *care-bussing*, "bussing" being an archaic word for "kissing."



# KING LEAR

ACT II

EDM. Not a word.

CUR. You may do then in time. Fare you well; sir.

[*Exit.*]

EDM. The duke be here to-night? The better! best!  
This weaves itself perforce into my business.  
My father hath set guard to take my brother;  
And I have one thing, of a queasy question,  
Which I must act: briefness and fortune, work!  
Brother, a word; descend: brother, I say!

*Enter EDGAR*

My father watches: O sir, fly this place; 20  
Intelligence is given where you are hid;  
You have now the good advantage of the night:  
Have you not spoken 'gainst the Duke of Cornwall?  
He's coming hither, now, i' the night, i' the haste,  
And Regan with him: have you nothing said  
Upon his party 'gainst the Duke of Albany?  
Advise yourself.

EDG. I am sure on't, not a word.

EDM. I hear my father coming: pardon me:  
In cunning I must draw my sword upon you:  
Draw: seem to defend yourself: now quit you well. 30

10 *toward*] imminent.

17 *of a queasy question*] of a delicate or ticklish character.

26 *Upon his party*] On the Duke of Cornwall's side, in that duke's support. Edmund is mystifying Edgar by putting him a question quite contradicting his first query. "Have you not spoken 'gainst the Duke of Cornwall?" (line 23, *supra*).

27 *Advise yourself*] Recollect.

29 *In cunning*] By way of pretence.

## SCENE I

## KING LEAR

Yield: come before my father. Light, ho, here!  
Fly, brother. Torches, torches! So farewell.

[*Exit Edgar.*

Some blood drawn on me would beget opinion

[*Wounds his arm.*

Of my more fierce endeavour: I have seen drunkards  
Do more than this in sport. Father, father!  
Stop, stop! No help?

*Enter GLOUCESTER, and Servants with torches*

GLOU. Now, Edmund, where's the villain?

EDM. Here stood he in the dark, his sharp sword  
out,

Mumbling of wicked charms, conjuring the moon  
To stand's auspicious mistress.

GLOU. But where is he? 40

EDM. Look, sir, I bleed.

GLOU. Where is the villain, Edmund?

EDM. Fled this way, sir. When by no means he  
could —

GLOU. Pursue him, ho! — Go after. [*Exeunt some  
Servants.*] “By no means” what?

EDM. Persuade me to the murder of your lordship;  
But that I told him the revenging gods

33 *beget opinion*] create a notion.

34-35 *I have seen . . . sport*] Reference is often made by the dramatists  
to the practice of young gallants when inflamed with drink stabbing  
themselves and drinking all manner of filth, by way of attesting their  
devotion to their mistress.

'Gainst parricides did all their thunders bend,  
 Spoke with how manifold and strong a bond  
 The child was bound to the father; sir, in fine,  
 Seeing how loathly opposite I stood  
 To his unnatural purpose, in fell motion ' 50  
 With his prepared sword he charges home  
 My unprovided body, lanced mine arm:  
 But when he saw my best alarum'd spirits  
 Bold in the quarrel's right, roused to the encounter,  
 Or whether gasted by the noise I made,  
 Full suddenly he fled.

GLOU.                      Let him fly far:  
 Not in this land shall he remain uncaught;  
 And found — dispatch. The noble duke my master,  
 My worthy arch and patron, comes to-night:  
 By his authority I will proclaim it, 60  
 That he which finds him shall deserve our thanks,  
 Bringing the murderous caitiff to the stake;  
 He that conceals him, death.

EDM. When I dissuaded him from his intent

49 *how loathly opposite I stood*] with what disgust I declared my  
 opposition.

50 *motion*] a technical term in fencing for making an attack

52 *lanced*] The Quartos have *lancht* or *launcht* which is an old spelling of  
 "lanced" The Folios have *latch'd*

53 *my best alarum'd spirits*] my finest courage roused to action.

55 *gasted by*] frightened by, aghast at Cf. *Othello*, V, i, 106: "Do you per-  
 ceive the *gastness* of her eye?"

58 *And found — dispatch*] An elliptical expression for "and when 'he is  
*found* there shall be no delay; he shall be killed outright." Cf. line  
 63, *infra*: "He that conceals him, death."

59 *arch*] chief.

And found him pight to do it, with curst speech  
 I threaten'd to discover him: he replied,  
 "Thou unpossessing bastard! dost thou think,  
 If I would stand against thee, could the reposeure  
 Of any trust, virtue, or worth, in thee  
 Make thy words faith'd? No: what I should deny — 70  
 As this I would; ay, though thou didst produce  
 My very character — I'd turn it all  
 To thy suggestion, plot, and damned practice:  
 And thou must make a dullard of the world,  
 If they not thought the profits of my death  
 Were very pregnant and potential spurs  
 To make thee seek it."

GLOU. Strong and fasten'd villain!  
 Would he deny his letter? I never got him.

[*Truckett within.*]

Hark, the duke's trumpets! I know not why he comes.  
 All ports I'll bar; the villain shall not 'scape; 80

65 *pight . . . curst*] settled or pledged . . . vehement.

67 *unpossessing*] without the right of inheriting

68 *reposeure*] Thus the Quartos. The Folios read *reposall* or *reposal*.

69 *virtue, or worth*] These words are co-ordinate with "reposeure of any trust"

70 *faith'd*] believed.

72 *character*] handwriting.

73 *suggestion . . . practice*] prompting or instigation . . . plotting or intrigue.

76 *pregnant*] obvious.

77 *Strong and fasten'd*] Resolute and determined.

78 *I never got him*] I never begot him, cf III, iv, 142, *infra*, where "gets" is similarly used for "begets" Thus the Quartos The Folios substitute less intelligibly *said he*?

# KING LEAR

## ACT II

The duke must grant me that: besides, his picture  
I will send far and near, that all the kingdom  
May have due note of him; and of my land,  
Loyal and natural boy, I'll work the means  
To make thee capable.

*Enter CORNWALL, REGAN, and Attendants*

CORN. How now, my noble friend! since I came hither,  
Which I can call but now, I have heard strange news.

REG. If it be true, all vengeance comes too short  
Which can pursue the offender. How dost, my lord?

GLOU. O, madam, my old heart is crack'd, is crack'd! 90

REG. What, did my father's godson seek your life?  
He whom my father named? your Edgar?

GLOU. O, lady, lady, shame would have it hid!

REG. Was he not companion with the riotous knights  
That tend upon my father?

GLOU. I know not, madam: 't is too bad, too bad.

EDM. Yes, madam, he was of that consort.

REG. No marvel then, though he were ill affected:  
'T is they have put him on the old man's death, 100  
To have the waste and spoil of his revenues.  
I have this present evening from my sister  
Been well inform'd of them, and with such cautions

84 *natural*] used in the double sense of "illegitimate" and "possessed of good natural instincts"

85 *capable*] *sc* of the succession.

97 *consort*] company, fellowship.

99 *put him on*] instigate him to attempt

100 *the waste and spoil*] Thus some copies of the First Quarto. The Folios read *th' expence and wast*

That if they come to sojourn at my house,  
I'll not be there.

CORN. Nor I, assure thee, Regan.  
Edmund, I hear that you have shown your father  
A child-like office.

EDM. 'T was my duty, sir.

GLOU. He did bewray his practice, and received  
This hurt you see, striving to apprehend him.

CORN. Is he pursued?

GLOU. Ay, my good lord.

CORN. If he be taken, he shall never more 110  
Be fear'd of doing harm: make your own purpose,  
How in my strength you please. For you, Edmund,  
Whose virtue and obedience doth this instant  
So much commend itself, you shall be ours:  
Natures of such deep trust we shall much need:  
You we first seize on.

EDM. I shall serve you, sir,  
Truly, however else.

GLOU. For him I thank your grace.

CORN. You know not why we came to visit you, —

REG. Thus out of season, threading dark-eyed night:  
Occasions, noble Gloucester, of some poise, 120

106 *child-like*] filial.

107 *bewray his practice*] betray his plot For "practice" cf line 73, *supra*

111-112 *make your own . . . please*] make your own arrangements, using  
as you will my power to serve you

119 *threading*] Thus the Folios. The Quartos read *threatning* Cf *Cor*,  
III, i, 124. "They would not *thread* (i. e., pass through) the gates"  
The image is from threading a needle.

120 *poise*] weight, moment.

# KING LEAR

## ACT II

Wherein we must have use of your advice:  
 Our father he hath writ, so hath our sister,  
 Of differences, which I least thought it fit  
 To answer from our home; the several messengers  
 From hence attend dispatch. Our good old friend,  
 Lay comforts to your bosom, and bestow  
 Your needful counsel to our business,  
 Which craves the instant use.

GLOU. I serve you, madam:  
 Your graces are right welcome. *[Flourish. Exeunt.]*

### SCENE II — BEFORE GLOUCESTER'S CASTLE

*Enter KENT and OSWALD, severally*

OSW. Good dawning to thee, friend: art of this  
 house?

KENT. Ay.

OSW. Where may we set our horses?

KENT. I' the mire.

OSW. Prithee, if thou lovest me, tell me.

KENT. I love thee not.

123 *least*] The Cambridge editors substitute *least* for *lest*, which is the reading of some copies of the First Quarto. *Best* is the reading of other copies of the First Quarto and of all other early editions. *Best* makes very good sense. "From our home" in line 124 may well mean "away from home," "in absence from home."

124 *[from our home]* For *home* some copies of the First Quarto read *hand*.

125 *attend dispatch*] wait to be dispatched.

1 *dawning*] Thus the Folios. The Quartos read *even* (*i. e.*, evening). The affected phrase implies the time about daybreak.

OSW. Why then I care not for thee.

KENT. If I had thee in Lipsbury pinfold, I would make thee care for me.

• OSW. Why dost thou use me thus? I know thee not. 10

• KENT. Fellow, I know thee.

OSW. What dost thou know me for?

KENT. A knave; a rascal; an eater of broken meats; a base, proud, shallow, beggarly, three-suited, hundred-pound, filthy, worsted-stocking knave; a lily-livered action-taking knave; a whoreson, glass-gazing, superserviceable, finical rogue; one-trunk-inheriting slave; one

8 *Lipsbury pinfold*] "Pinfold" is a synonym for "pound," a public enclosure for the confinement of stray cattle. Lipsbury is unexplained. It is perhaps a coined word sarcastically meaning "the lps." Kent might well threaten to get Oswald between his teeth

14 *three-suited*] obviously a term of reproach, as in Jonson's *Silent Woman*, iv, 5, 10-11: "Thou wert a pitiful poor fellow, . . . and had nothing but *three suits* of apparel." Below, III, iv, 129, Edgar speaks rather contradictorily of "three suits to his back" as a sign of comparative prosperity. But Kent means here that a beggarly servitor like Oswald gives himself the airs of a man with a rich wardrobe

14-15 *hundred-pound*] another term of reproach Cf Middleton's *Phornix*, IV, iii, 55-56: "How's this? am I used like a *hundred-pound gentleman*?"

15 *worsted-stocking*] Poor people wore worsted stockings, while the stockings of rich people were invariably of silk

16 *action-taking knave*] one who resorts to legal action when assaulted instead of challenging an assailant to fight

*glass-gazing*] surveying his person in a looking-glass.

*superserviceable*] one above his duties. Cf IV, vi, 254, *infra*: "a *serviceable* villain"

17 *one-trunk-inheriting*] possessing a stock of clothes which would all go into a single trunk.



that wouldst be a bawd in way of good service, and art nothing but the composition of a knave, beggar, coward, pandar, and the son and heir of a mongrel bitch: one <sup>20</sup> whom I will beat into clamorous whining, if thou deniest the least syllable of thy addition.

Osw. Why, what a monstrous fellow art thou, thus to rail on one that is neither known of thee nor knows thee!

KENT. What a brazen-faced varlet art thou, to deny thou knowest me! Is it two days ago since I tripped up thy heels and beat thee before the king? Draw, you rogue: for, though it be night, yet the moon shines; I'll make a sop o' the moonshine of you: draw, you whore-son cullionly barber-monger, draw. [*Drawing his sword.* <sup>30</sup>

Osw. Away! I have nothing to do with thee.

KENT. Draw, you rascal: you come with letters against the king, and take vanity the puppet's part against the royalty of her father: draw, you rogue, or I'll so carbonado your shanks: draw, you rascal; come your ways.

Osw. Help, ho! murder! help!

<sup>22</sup> *addition*] title.

<sup>28-29</sup> *I'll make a sop o' the moonshine of you*] I'll beat you to a mummy by moonlight. There is a quibbling reference to a popular dish known as "eggs in moonshine." "A sop" literally meant a piece of toast soaked in wine or ale.

<sup>30</sup> *cullionly barber-monger*] rascally frequenter of barbers' shops, where he was forever getting his hair and beard trimmed

<sup>33</sup> *vanity the puppet's part*] Lady Vanity was a conventional character in the old moralities, and was usually dressed as a woman.

<sup>35</sup> *carbonado*] slash; a culinary term

KENT. Strike, you slave; stand, rogue; stand, you neat slave, strike. [Beating him.]

Osw. Help, ho! murder! murder!

*Enter EDMUND, with his rapier drawn, CORNWALL, REGAN, GLOUCESTER, and Servants*

EDM. How now! What's the matter? [Parting them. 40

KENT. With you, goodman boy, an you please: come, I'll flesh you; come on, young master.

GLOU. Weapons! arms! What's the matter here?

CORN. Keep peace, upon your lives;  
He dies that strikes again. What is the matter?

REG. The messengers from our sister and the king.

CORN. What is your difference? speak.

Osw. I am scarce in breath, my lord.

KENT. No marvel, you have so bestirred your valour.  
You cowardly rascal, nature disclaims in thee: a tailor 50  
made thee.

37-38 *you neat slave*] you unmitigated scoundrel. Cf. Jonson's *Poetaster*, III, v, 15, "*neat wine*" and *ibid.*, IV, iii, 20, "*my neat scoundrel*" There may be in "*neat*" an implicit allusion to the "*neatness*," i. e., spruceness, of Oswald's attire

40-41 *What's the matter? . . . goodman boy*] In the Folios the word *matter*? is followed by an italicised word *Part* which is no doubt an elliptical indication of the accepted stage direction Kent attaches to the word "*matter*" the special sense of "*quarrel*" *goodman*] a contemptuous mode of address, equivalent to "*master*."

42 *flesh you*] initiate you in fight. Cf. *Hen. V*, II, iv, 50, and line 118, *infra*.

50 *disclaims in thee*] disowns thee; in Elizabethan English an enclitic "*in*" commonly follows "*disclaim*."

CORN. Thou art a strange fellow: a tailor make a man?

KENT. Ay, a tailor, sir: a stone-cutter or a painter could not have made him so ill, though he had been but two hours at the trade.

CORN. Speak yet, how grew your quarrel?

OSW. This ancient ruffian, sir, whose life I have spared at suit of his gray beard, —

KENT. Thou whoreson zed! thou unnecessary letter! My lord, if you will give me leave, I will tread this unbolted villain into mortar, and daub the walls of a jakes with him. Spare my gray beard, you wagtail?

CORN. Peace, sirrah!

You beastly knave, know you no reverence?

KENT. Yes, sir; but anger hath a privilege.

CORN. Why art thou angry?

KENT. That such a slave as this should wear a sword,  
Who wears no honesty. Such smiling rogues as these,  
Like rats, oft bite the holy cords a-twain  
Which are too intrinse to unloose; smooth every passion  
That in the natures of their lords rebel;  
Bring oil to fire, snow to their colder moods;

53 *stone-cutter*] sculptor.

59 *zed . . . letter*] Cf. Ben Jonson's *English Grammar*: "Zed is a letter often heard among us, but seldom seen"

60-61 *unbolted*] unsifted, crude, coarse Cf. *Hen V*, II, ii, 137: "finely bolted"

65 *anger hath a privilege*] Cf. *K. John*, IV, iii, 32: "impatience hath his privilege."

69 *holy cords*] bonds of filial affection.

70 *intrinse*] tightly knotted; a fuller form is "intrinsic"; cf. *Ant. and Cleop.*, V, ii, 302: "this knot *intrinsecate*," and note.

Renege, affirm, and turn their halcyon beaks  
 With every gale and vary of their masters,  
 Knowing nought, like dogs, but following.  
 A plague upon your epileptic visage!  
 Smile you my speeches, as I were a fool?  
 Goose, if I had you upon Sarum plain,  
 I'd drive ye cackling home to Camelot.

CORN. What, art thou mad, old fellow?

80

GLOU. How fell you out? say that.

KENT. No contraries hold more antipathy  
 Than I and such a knave.

CORN. Why dost thou call him knave? What is his  
 fault?

KENT. His countenance likes me not.

73 *Renege*] Deny, renounce.

*halcyon*] the kingfisher. There was a popular belief that if the bird was suspended in the air by a cord round its neck, its bill would always point to the quarter from which the wind blew. Cf Marlowe's *Jew of Malta*, I, i, 38-39: "But now how stands the wind? Into what corner peers my *halcyon's* bill?"

76 *epileptic*] distorted by grinning.

77 *Smile you?*] Do you smile at? The verb is rarely used actively. The preposition is similarly omitted, I, i, 160, *supra*: "Thou swear'st thy gods." All the early editions save the Fourth Folio read *smoule* or *smoyle*, an archaic form of "smile."

78 *Sarum*] Salisbury.

79 *Camelot*] the name of the place where in the Arthurian romances King Arthur kept his court and sat in judgment on unworthy knights. Camelot is variously identified with Winchester and South Cadbury, a village in Somerset. The latter is doubtfully said to have been famous for its wealth of geese. So literal an association is not necessary to the interpretation of the passage

CORN. No more perchance does mine, nor his, nor hers.

KENT. Sir, 't is my occupation to be plain:  
I have seen better faces in my time  
Than stands on any shoulder that I see  
Before me at this instant.

CORN. This is some fellow,  
Who, having been praised for bluntness, doth affect  
A saucy roughness, and constrains the garb  
Quite from his nature: he cannot flatter, he, —  
An honest mind and plain, — he must speak truth  
An they will take it, so; if not, he's plain.  
These kind of knaves I know, which in this plainness  
Harbour more craft and more corrupter ends  
Than twenty silly ducking observants  
That stretch their duties nicely.

90

KENT. Sir, in good faith, in sincere verity,  
Under the allowance of your great aspect,  
Whose influence, like the wreath of radiant fire  
On flickering Phœbus' front, —

100

CORN. What mean'st by this?

KENT. To go out of my dialect, which you discom-

92-93 *constrains . . . nature*] forces his outward manner to something different from his natural disposition; his frankness conceals a deceitful nature

96 *These kind*] See note on *Tw. Night*, I, v, 83: "*These set kind of fools.*"

98-99 *silly ducking observants . . . nicely*] stupidly obsequious attendants, who perform their duties to the extreme limit of punctiliousness.

101-102 *aspect . . . influence*] technical terms of astrology; they well suit the pompously stilted style of speech which Kent here ironically affects.

mend so much. I know, sir, I am no flatterer: he that beguiled you in a plain accent was a plain knave; which, for my part, I will not be, though I should win your displeasure to entreat me to 't.

CORN. What was the offence you gave him?

Osw. I never gave him any:

110

It pleased the king his master very late  
To strike at me, upon his misconstruction;  
When he, conjunct, and flattering his displeasure,  
Tripp'd me behind; being down, insulted, rail'd,  
And put upon him such a deal of man,  
That worthied him, got praises of the king  
For him attempting who was self-subdued,  
And in the fleshment of this dread exploit  
Drew on me here again.

KENT. None of these rogues and cowards  
But Ajax is their fool.

107-108 *I will not be . . . me to't*] Kent clumsily implies that he would decline to be, like Oswald, "a plain (or downright) knave," though he should win Cornwall's disfavour (which he values more than his favour) by yielding to his request to assume that character

113 *conjunct*] in concert or alliance (with Lear) This reading of the Quartos is replaced in the Folios by *compact*, which has much the same meaning.

114-117 *being down . . . self-subdued*] when I was down he insulted and railed at me, and made himself out to be such a brave man that he won much repute, obtained praises of the king for attacking one who was able to control his anger.

118 *the fleshment*] the initial elation Cf line 42, *supra*.

120 *Ajax*] a synonym for a brave, blunt man, whom designing villains always make their butt or get the better of. Doubtless Shakespeare

# KING LEAR

## ACT II

CORN. Fetch forth the stocks! 120  
You stubborn ancient knave, you reverend braggart,  
We'll teach you —

KENT. Sir, I am too old to learn:  
Call not your stocks for me: I serve the king,  
On whose employment I was sent to you:  
You shall do small respect, show too bold malice  
Against the grace and person of my master,  
Stocking his messenger.

CORN. Fetch forth the stocks! As I have life and  
honour,  
There shall he sit till noon.

REG. Till noon! till night, my lord, and all night too.

KENT. Why, madam, if I were your father's dog, 131  
You should not use me so.

REG. Sir, being his knave, I will.

CORN. This is a fellow of the self-same colour  
Our sister speaks of. Come, bring away the stocks!  
[Stocks brought out.]

GLOU. Let me beseech your grace not to do so:  
His fault is much, and the good king his master  
Will check him for 't: your purposed low correction  
Is such as basest and contemned'st wretches  
For pilferings and most common trespasses  
Are punish'd with: the king must take it ill, 140

had in mind crafty Ulysses' contemptuous usage of Ajax in Ovid's  
*Metamorphoses*, Bk. XIII.

136-140 *His fault . . . Are punish'd with*] This passage is omitted from  
the Folios.

140 *the king*] Thus the Quartos. The Folios read *The King his Master*,  
*needs*.

That he, so slightly valued in his messenger,  
Should have him thus restrain'd.

CORN. I'll answer that.

REG. My sister may receive it much more worse,  
'To have her gentleman abused, assaulted,  
For following her affairs. Put in his legs.

Come, my good lord, away. [*Kent is put in the stocks.*]

[*Exeunt all but Gloucester and Kent.*]

GLOU. I am sorry for thee, friend; 't is the duke's  
pleasure,  
Whose disposition, all the world well knows,  
Will not 'be rubb'd nor stopp'd: I'll entreat for  
thee.

KENT. Pray, do not, sir: I have watch'd and travell'd  
hard; 150  
Some time I shall sleep out, the rest I'll whistle.

A good man's fortune may grow out at heels:  
Give you good morrow!

GLOU. The duke's to blame in this; 't will be ill  
taken. [*Exit.*]

KENT. Good king, that must approve the common  
saw,  
Thou out of heaven's benediction comest  
To the warm sun!

145 *For . . . legs*] This line is omitted from the Folios.

149 *rubb'd*] impeded, hindered. "Rub" technically meant an obstacle  
in the bowling alley.

155-157 *must approve . . . sun*] must make good the common proverb,  
which ordinarily runs "out of God's blessing into the warm sun"  
The phrase is usually applied to a passage "from better to worse,"



Approach, thou beacon to this under globe,  
 That by thy comfortable beams I may  
 Peruse this letter! Nothing almost sees miracles 160  
 But misery: I know 't is from Cordelia,  
 Who hath most fortunately been inform'd  
 Of my obscured course; and shall find time  
 From this enormous state, seeking to give  
 Losses their remedies. All weary and c'er-watch'd,  
 Take vantage, heavy eyes, not to behold  
 This shameful lodging.  
 Fortune, good night: smile once more; turn thy wheel!  
[Sleeps.]

to the exchange of a reasonably safe haven for a scene of probable danger. The origin of the proverb, which is often cited by Elizabethan authors, is obscure. There is perhaps a reference to the *ails* that awaited threatened persons who took sanctuary in churches on coming out into the open air.

160-161 *Nothing . . . misery*] It is almost only by the unfortunate that miracles are looked for or seen; prosperous people stand in no need of them.

163-165 *and shall find time . . . remedies*] This is the reading of all the old editions; the punctuation is substantially that of the Folios. Kent is continuing in a disjointed way his reference to Cordelia, who, he says, will (or, is certain to) find opportunity out of this anomalous condition of things for an endeavour to remedy these wrongs. The loose construction reflects Kent's drowsy condition. "Enormous" is found in the sense of "abnormal" or "anomalous" in *Two Noble Kinsmen*, V, i, 62: "O great corrector of *enormous* times."

166 *Take vantage*] Take advantage of your sleepiness.

## SCENE III — A WOOD

*Enter EDGAR*

EDG. I heard myself proclaim'd;  
 And by the happy hollow of a tree  
 Escaped the hunt. No port is free; no place,  
 That guard and most unusual vigilance  
 Does not attend my taking. Whiles I may 'scape  
 I will preserve myself: and am bethought  
 To take the basest and most poorest shape  
 That ever penury in contempt of man  
 Brought near to 'beast: my face I'll grime with filth,  
 Blanck<sup>2</sup> my loins, elf<sup>3</sup> all my hair in knots,  
 And with presented nakedness out-face  
 The winds and persecutions of the sky.  
 The country gives me proof and precedent  
 Of Bedlam<sup>4</sup> beggars, who with roaring voices  
 Strike in their numb'd and mortified bare arms  
 Pins, wooden pricks, nails, sprigs of rosemary;

10

---

2 *happy*] discovered by good luck.

3 *port*] place of exit.

4 *That guard*] Where watchful sentinel.

6 *am bethought*] have thought, have designed.

10 *elf . . . hair*] tangle all my hair; as elves were held to mat the hair of sluts. Cf. *Rom and Jul.*, I, iv, 90-91: "(Queen Mab) bakes the elf-locks in fowl, sluttish hairs."

14 *Bedlam beggars*] half-crazy beggars, strictly applied to mendicant patients discharged from Bethlehem or Bedlam hospital, but often used with a more general significance of pauper idiots. Cf. I, ii, 129-130, *supra*, and III, vii, 102, *infra*.

16 *wooden pricks*] skewers of wood.

# KING LEAR

## ACT II

And with this horrible object, from low farms,  
 Poor pelting villages, sheep-cotes and mills,  
 Sometime with lunatic bans, sometime with prayers,  
 Enforce their charity. Poor Turlygod! poor Tom! . 20  
 That's something yet: Edgar I nothing am. [*Exit.*]

### SCENE IV — BEFORE GLOUCESTER'S CASTLE

#### KENT IN THE STOCKS

*Enter LEAR, FOOL, and Gentleman*

LEAR. 'Tis strange that they should so depart from  
 home,  
 And not send back my messenger.

GENT. As I learn'd,  
 The night before there was no purpose in them  
 Of this remove.

KENT. Hail to thee, noble master!

LEAR. Ha!  
 Makest thou this shame thy pastime?

KENT. No, my lord.

17 *object . . . low*] appearance . . . lowly.

18 *pelting*] paltry, contemptible.

19 *lunatic bans*] mad imprecations.

20 *Turlygod*] This fantastic appellation of a crazy beggar is unexplained.  
 A strange fraternity of naked beggars, which infested the continent of  
 Europe in the fourteenth century seems to have been known as Turl-  
 upins, of which Turlygod has been doubtfully interpreted as a corrupt  
 form.

21 *Edgar I nothing am*] I am no longer likely to be mistaken for Edgar.  
 I have rid myself of his likeness.

FOOL. Ha, ha! he wears cruel garters. Horses are tied by the heads, dogs and bears by the neck, monkeys by the loins, and men by the legs: when a man's over-lusty at legs, then he wears wooden nether-stocks.

10

LEAR. What's he that hath so much thy place mistook  
To set thee here?

KENT. It is both he and she;  
Your son and daughter.

LEAR. No.

KENT. Yes.

LEAR. No, I say.

KENT. I say, yea.

LEAR. No, no, they would not.

KENT. Yes, they have.

LEAR. By Jupiter, I swear, no.

20

KENT. By Juno, I swear, ay.

LEAR. They durst not do't;  
They could not, would not do't; 't is worse than  
murder,  
To do upon respect such violent outrage:  
Resolve me with all modest haste which way

7 *cruel*] a pun on the word in its ordinary use, and in the sense of worsted yarn, commonly spelt "crewel" The quip is often met with (Cf. Ben Jonson's *Alchemist*, I, i, 173-174. "Ere we contribute a new *crewel garter* To his most worsted worship")

10 *nether-stocks*] stockings or socks, as opposed to knee breeches, the upper-stocks

23 *upon respect*] with deliberation.

24 *Resolve me . . . haste*] Inform me with all the speed that becomes a truthful statement.

Thou mightst deserve, or they impose, this usage,  
Coming from us.

KENT. My lord, when at their home  
I did commend your highness' letters to them,  
Ere I was risen from the place that show'd  
My duty kneeling, came there a reeking post,  
Stew'd in his haste, half breathless, panting forth 30  
From Goneril his mistress salutations;  
Deliver'd letters, spite of intermission,  
Which presently they read: on whose contents  
They summon'd up their meiny, straight took horse;  
Commanded me to follow and attend  
The leisure of their answer; gave me cold looks:  
And meeting here the other messenger,  
Whose welcome, I perceived, had poison'd mine —  
Being the very fellow that of late  
Display'd so saucily against your highness — 40  
Having more man than wit about me, drew:  
He raised the house with loud and coward cries.  
Your son and daughter found this trespass worth  
The shame which here it suffers.

FOOL. Winter's not gone yet, if the wild gees fly  
that way.

Fathers that wear rags  
Do make their children blind

---

32 *spite of intermission*] without any delay, at the cost of postponing audience of me.

34 *meiny*] retinue, household.

40 *Display'd so saucily*] Showed so saucy a demeanour.

41 *drew*] I drew my sword The subject "I" is drawn from "I perceived" in line 38

But fathers that bear bags  
 Shall see their children kind.  
 Fortune, that arrant whore,  
 Ne'er turns the key to the poor.

50

But, for all this, thou shalt have as many dolours for thy daughters as thou canst tell in a year.

LEAR. O, how this mother swells up toward my heart!

Hysterica passio, down, thou climbing sorrow,  
 Thy element's below! Where is this daughter?

KENT. With the earl, sir, here within.

LEAR. Follow me not; stay here. [Exit.

GENT. Made you no more offence but what you speak of?

60

KENT. None.

How chance the king comes with so small a train?

F. L. An thou hadst been set i' the stocks for that que on, thou hadst well deserved it.

R. Why, fool?

F. We'll set thee to school to an ant, to teach thee th 's no labouring i' the winter. All that follow

52 turns. Kent offers the key of her favours

53 dolours] a pun on the word in the sense of the coin, and of grief For the like quibble see *Tempest*, II i, 18-19, and note for thy daughters] owing to, in regard to, thy daughters

55 this mother] the popular name of an hysterical malady, the chief symptom of which was a choking sensation in the throat The disease was technically known as "hysterica passio"

66-67 We'll set thee . . winter] Cf *Proverbs*, vi, 6-8. "Go to the ant, thou sluggard; consider her ways, and be wise which having no guide, overseer, or ruler, provideth her meat in the summer, and gathereth her food in the harvest"

# KING LEAR

ACT II

their noses are led by their eyes but blind men; and there's not a nose among twenty but can smell him that's stinking. Let go thy hold when a great wheel runs down a hill, lest it break thy neck with following it; but the great one that goes up the hill, let him draw thee after. When a wise man gives thee better counsel, give me mine again: I would have none but knaves follow it, since a fool gives it.

That sir which serves and seeks for gain,  
And follows but for form,  
Will pack when it begins to rain,  
And leave thee in the storm.  
But I will tarry; the fool will stay, 90  
And let the wise man fly:  
The knave turns fool that runs away;  
The fool no knave, perdy.

KENT. Where learned you this, fool?  
FOOL. Not i' the stocks, fool.

*Re-enter LEAR, with GLOUCESTER*

LEAR. Deny to speak with me? They are sick? they are weary?  
They have travell'd all the night? Mere fetches;  
The images of revolt and flying off.  
Fetch me a better answer.

GLOU. My dear lord,  
You know the fiery quality of the duke; 90

---

76 *That sir*] That gentleman.

87-88 *fetches . . . flying off*] tricks or subterfuges; the tokens of rebellion and disaffection.

How unremoveable and fix'd he is  
In his own course.

LEAR. Vengeance! plague! death! confusion!  
Fiery? what quality? Why, Gloucester, Gloucester,  
I'd speak with the Duke of Cornwall and his wife.

GLOU. Well, my good lord, I have inform'd them so.

LEAR. Inform'd them! Dost thou understand me,  
man?

GLOU. Ay, my good lord.

LEAR. The king would speak with Cornwall; the dear  
father

99

Would with his daughter speak, commands her service:  
Are they inform'd of this? My breath and blood!

"Fiery"? "the fiery duke"? Tell the hot duke that —  
No, but not yet: may be he is not well:

Infirmity doth still neglect all office

Whereto our health is bound; we are not ourselves

When nature being oppress'd commands the mind

To suffer with the body: I'll forbear;

And am fall'n out with my more headier will,

To take the indisposed and sickly fit

For the sound man. [*Looking on Kent*] Death on my  
state! wherefore

110

Should he sit here? This act persuades me

That this remotion of the duke and her

100 *commands her service*] Thus most copies of the First Quarto. The  
Folios read less intelligibly *commands, tends, service*

108-110 *fall'n out*      *sound man*] angered with my too headstrong will,  
in mistaking a man suffering from a fit of indisposition and sickness  
for one in health.

112 *remotion*] removal.



# KING LEAR

## ACT II

Is practice only. Give me my servant forth.  
Go tell the duke and's wife I'd speak with them,  
Now, presently: bid them come forth and hear me,  
Or at their chamber-door I'll beat the drum  
Till it cry sleep to death.

GLOU. I would have all well betwixt you. *[Exit.*

LEAR. O me, my heart, my rising heart! But down!

FOOL. Cry to it, nuncle, as the cockney did to the eels when she put 'em i' the paste alive; she knapped 'em o' the coxcombs with a stick, and cried "Down, wantons, down!" 'T was her brother that, in pure kindness to his horse, buttered his hay. 124

*Re-enter GLOUCESTER, with CORNWALL, REGAN, and Servants.*

LEAR. Good morrow to you both.

CORN. Hail to your grace!  
*[Kent is set at liberty.]*

REG. I am glad to see your highness.

LEAR. Regan, I think you are; I know what reason I have to think so: if thou shouldst not be glad, I would divorce me from thy mother's tomb, Sepulchring an adultress. *[To Kent]* O, are you free? 130

113 *Give . . . forth*] Free my servant from the stocks.

117 *cry sleep to death*] murder sleep with the noise

120 *cockney*] "cockney" is rare in the sense, apparently required here, of a female "cook" or "scullion." It is more often applied to an effeminate man or woman. But the fool talks somewhat at random.

121 *knapped*] cracked, this is the reading of the Folios. The Quartos read *rapt*.

124 *buttered his hay*] a reference to the practice of dishonest ostlers, who sold for their own profit greased hay which the horses refused.

Some other time for that. Beloved Regan,  
Thy sister's naught: O Regan, she hath tied  
Sharp-tooth'd unkindness, like a vulture, here:

[Points to his heart.

I can scarce speak to thee; thou'lt not believe  
With how depraved a quality — O Regan!

REG. I pray you, sir, take patience: I have hope  
You less know how to value her desert  
Than she to scant her duty.

LEAR. Say, how is that?

REG. I cannot think my sister in the least  
Would fail her obligation: if, sir, perchance  
She have restrain'd the riots of your followers,  
'Tis on such ground and to such wholesome end  
As clears her from all blame. 140

LEAR. My curses on her!

REG. O, sir, you are old;  
Nature in you stands on the very verge  
Of her confine: you should be ruled and led  
By some discretion that discerns your state

135 *quality*] disposition.

137-138 *You less know . . . duty*] The duplication of the negative words  
"less know" and "scant" makes the somewhat inverted language difficult to paraphrase, though the sense is clear. The general meaning is  
"You are no more capable of adequately valuing her merits than she  
is capable of failing in her filial duty", in other words, "she is more  
dutiful than you are capable of recognising."

147 *some discretion state*] some discreet person that understands  
your helpless condition. The abstract word "discretion" is put for  
the concrete person, who possesses that quality. Cf. III, i, 24, *infra*,  
"speculations."

# KING LEAR

## ACT II

Better than you yourself. Therefore I pray you  
That to our sister you do make return;  
Say you have wrong'd her, sir.

LEAR. Ask her forgiveness? 150  
Do you but mark how this becomes the house:  
[*Kneeling*] "Dear daughter, I confess that I am old;  
Age is unnecessary: on my knees I beg  
That you'll vouchsafe me raiment, bed and food."

REG. Good sir, no more; these are unsightly tricks:  
Return you to my sister.

LEAR. [*Rising*] Never, Regan:  
She hath abated me of half my train;  
Look'd black upon me; struck me with her tongue,  
Most serpent-like, upon the very heart:  
All the stored vengeance of heaven fall 160  
On her ingrateful top! Strike her young bones,  
You taking airs, with lameness.

CORN. Fie, sir, fie!

LEAR. You nimble lightnings, dart your blinding  
flames  
Into her scornful eyes. Infect her beauty,  
You fen-suck'd fogs, drawn by the powerful sun  
To fall and blast her pride.

151 *becomes the house*] fits family relations, suits the domestic ties between father and daughter

153 *Age is unnecessary*] Old people are useless

161 *young bones*] unborn infants.

162 *taking airs*] airs that bewitch, strike with disease Cf. III, iv, 58, *infra*:  
*Hamlet*, I, i, 163, and *M. Wives*, IV, iv, 31, "And there he blasts the  
tree, and takes the cattle"

166 *To fall and blast*] "So that it fall and blast." Thus the Quartos.

REG. O the blest gods! so will you wish on me,  
When the rash mood is on.

LEAR. No, Regan, thou shalt never have my curse:  
Thy tender-hefted nature shall not give 170  
Thee o'er to harshness: her eyes are fierce, but thine  
Do comfort and not burn. 'Tis not in thee  
To grudge my pleasures, to cut off my train,  
To bandy hasty words, to scant my sizes,  
And in conclusion to oppose the bolt  
Against my coming in: thou better know'st  
The offices of nature, bond of childhood,  
Effects of courtesy, dues of gratitude;  
Thy half o' the kingdom hast thou not forgot,  
Wherein I thee endow'd.

REG. Good sir, to the purpose. 180

LEAR. Who put my man i' the stocks? [*Tucket within.*]

The Folios read *To fall and bluster*. "Fall" is often used transitively in Shakespeare in the sense of "humble" or "pull down" But it may have here the ordinary intransitive meaning of "fall to ruin."

168 *rash mood*] impulsive fit of passion.

170 *tender-hefted*] Thus the Folios The Quartos read *tender hested* Neither word is quite easy to understand Shakespeare uses "hefts" in *Wint. Tale*, II, 1, 45, for "hevings" (of the breast), hence *tender-hefted* may mean "of tender disposition." More commonly "heft" means either "weight" or "handle" (cf "haft"), which would make "tender-hefted" equivalent either to "weighted with tenderness" or "manageable" "Hest" or "behest" means vow or promise, and *tender-hested* would mean "tender-vowed," "plighted to gentleness." (cf "plighted *hest*" (Turberville, *Ovid's Epist.*, 1576, p. 141).

174 *scant my sizes*] contract my allowances At Cambridge a sizar was one who received sizes or allowances of food from the college.

178 *Effects*] Shows, manifestations.

# KING LEAR

## ACT II

CORN. What trumpet's that?

REG. I know't; my sister's: this approves her letter,  
That she would soon be here.

*Enter OSWALD*

Is your lady come?

LEAR. This is a slave whose easy-borrow'd pride  
Dwells in the fickle grace of her he follows.  
Out, varlet, from my sight!

CORN. What means your grace?

LEAR. Who stock'd my servant? Regan, I have  
good hope  
Thou didst not know on't. Who comes here?

*Enter GONERIL*

O heavens,

If you do love old men, if your sweet sway  
Allow obedience, if yourselves are old, 190  
Make it your cause; send down, and take my part!  
[*To Gon.*] Art not ashamed to look upon this beard?  
O Regan, wilt thou take her by the hand?

GON. Why not by the hand, sir? How have I  
offended?

All's not offence that indiscretion finds  
And dotage terms so.

182 *approves*] corroborates, confirms.

184-185 *easy-borrow'd pride . . . follows*] whose pride, assumed on easy  
pretensions (*i. e.* on no just ground) rises and falls with the shifting  
favour of his mistress.

190 *Allow*] Approve of.

195 *finds*] judges, esteems.

LEAR. O sides, you are too tough;  
Will you yet hold? How came my man i' the stocks?

CORN. I set him there, sir: but his own disorders  
Deserved much less advancement.

LEAR. You! did you?

REG. I pray you, father, being weak, seem so. 200  
If, till the expiration of your month,  
You will return and sojourn with my sister,  
Dismissing half your train, come then to me:  
I am now from home and out of that provision  
Which shall be needful for your entertainment.

LEAR. Return to her, and fifty men dismiss'd?  
No, rather I abjure all roofs, and choose  
To wage against the enmity o' the air,  
To be a comrade with the wolf and owl, —  
Necessity's sharp pinch! Return with her? 210  
Why, the hot-blooded France, that dowerless took  
Our youngest born, I could as well be brought  
To kneel his throne, and, squire-like, pension beg  
To keep base life afoot. Return with her?  
Persuade me rather to be slave and sumpter  
To this detested groom. [*Pointing at Oswald.*]

GON. At your choice, sir.

LEAR. I prithee, daughter, do not make me mad:  
I will not trouble thee, my child; farewell:  
We'll no more meet, no more see one another:

200 *seem so*] deem yourself so, behave so

208 *wage against*] contend with "Wage" is rarely used intransitively.

209 *owl*] Thus the early editions. There seems no good ground for accepting Collier's suggestion *howl*

215 *sumpter*] literally a pack-horse, but often found in the sense of "drudge."

# KING LEAR

ACT II

*But yet thou art my flesh, my blood, my daughter;* 220  
*Or rather a disease that 's in my flesh,*  
 Which I must needs call mine: thou art a boil,  
 A plague-sore, an embossed carbuncle,  
 In my corrupted blood. But I'll not chide thee;  
 Let shame come when it will, I do not call it:  
 I do not bid the thunder-bearer shoot,  
 Nor tell tales of thee to high-judging Jove:  
 Mend when thou canst; be better at thy leisure:  
 I can be patient; I can stay with Regan,  
 I and my hundred knights.

REG. Not altogether so: 230  
 I look'd not for you yet, nor am provided  
 For your fit welcome. Give ear, sir, to my sister;  
 For those that mingle reason with your passion  
 Must be content to think you old, and so —  
 But she knows what she does.

LEAR. Is this well spoken?

REG. I dare avouch it, sir: what, fifty followers?  
 Is it not well? What should you need of more?  
 Yea, or so many, sith that both charge and danger  
 Speak 'gainst so great a number? How in one house  
 Should many people under two commands 240  
 Hold amity? 'T is hard, almost impossible.

223 *embossed*] swollen.

226-227 *thunder-bearer . . high-judging*] Both expressions refer to Jupiter Cf. *Troil. and Cress.*, II, iii, 9 "thunder-darter" "High-judging" merely means "pronouncing judgments on high." "

233 *mingle reason . . . passion*] examine your passionate outbursts in the light of reason.

238 *charge*] expense.

# KING LEAR

REG. Why not, my lord? If then they chanced to  
slack you,

LEAR. I gave you all —

LEAR. Made you my guardians, my depositaries, 250  
But kept a reservation to be follow'd

REG. And speak 't again, my lord; no more with me.

When others are more wicked; not being the worst  
Stands in some rank of praise. [*To Con.*] I'll go with  
thee:

GON. Hear me, my lord:

What need you five and twenty, ten, or five,  
To follow in a house where twice so many  
Have a command to tend you?

250 depositaries] trustees.

251 *reservation*] used in the legal sense of saving clause, as in I, i, 133, *supra*.



# KING LEAR

ACT II

REG.

What need one?

LEAR. O, reason not the need: our basest beggars  
Are in the poorest thing superfluous:  
Allow not nature more than nature needs,  
Man's life's as cheap as beast's: thou art a lady;  
If only to go warm were gorgeous,  
Why, nature needs not what thou gorgeous wear'st,  
Which scarcely keeps thee warm. But for true  
need, —

You heavens, give me that patience, patience I  
need! 270

You see me here, you gods, a poor old man,  
As full of grief as age; wretched in both:  
If it be you that stir these daughters' hearts  
Against their father, fool me not so much  
To bear it tamely; touch me with noble anger,  
And let not women's weapons, water-drops,  
Stain my man's cheeks! No, you unnatural hags,  
I will have such revenges on you both  
That all the world shall — I will do such things, —  
What they are, yet I know not, but they shall be 280  
The terrors of the earth. You think I'll weep;  
No, I'll not weep:  
I have full cause of weeping; but this heart

264 *Are . . . superfluous*] Have in the very depths of poverty something above their actual need. Cf. IV, i, 68, *infra*, where "superfluous" means "possessed of abundance."

267-269 *If only . . . warm*] If fine clothing were only to be measured by its power of keeping one warm, there would be no need of your gorgeous raiment, which scarcely serves the purposes of warmth.

Shall break into a hundred thousand flaws,  
Or ere I'll weep. O fool, I shall go mad!

[*Exeunt Lear, Gloucester, Kent, and Fool.*]

CORN. Let us withdraw; 't will be a storm.

"

[*Storm and tempest.*]

REG. This house is little: the old man and his people  
Cannot be well bestow'd.

GON. 'T is his own blame; hath put himself from rest,  
And must needs taste his folly. 290

REG. For his particular, I'll receive him gladly,  
But not one follower.

GON. So am I purposed.  
Where is my lord of Gloucester?

CORN. Follow'd the old man forth: he is return'd.

[*Re-enter GLOUCESTER*]

GLOU. The king is in high rage.

CORN. Whither is he going?

GLOU. He calls to horse; but will I know not whither.

CORN. 'T is best to give him way; he leads himself.

GON. My lord, entreat him by no means to stay.

GLOU. Alack, the night comes on, and the bleak  
winds

Do sorely ruffle; for many miles about 300  
There's scarce a bush.

284 *flaws*] usually "cracks" or "chinks," but not uncommonly "fragments." The word is specifically used of thin parings of precious stones

291 *For his particular*] In his own person, as for himself alone.

298 *entreat . . . no means*] do not on any account entreat him.

300 *ruffle*] bluster.

# KING LEAR

•  
ACT II

REG.

*O, sir, to wilful men*

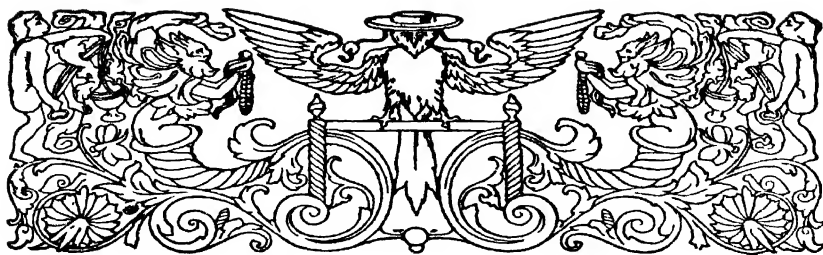
The injuries that they themselves procure  
Must be their schoolmasters. Shut up your doors:  
He is attended with a desperate train;  
And what they may incense him to, being apt  
To have his ear abused, wisdom bids fear.

CORN. Shut up your doors, my lord; 't is a wild night:  
My Regan counsels well: come out o' the storm.

[*Exeunt.*]

---

304 *He is attended . . . train*] Regan appears to falsify the present facts. Lear departs unattended by any train of followers. The fool is now the king's only companion, cf. III, i, 15-16, *infra*.



## ACT THIRD — SCENE I

### A HEATH

*Storm still. Enter KENT and a Gentleman, meeting*

KENT



WHO'S THERE, BESIDES  
foul weather?

GENT. One minded like the  
weather, most unquietly.

KENT. I know you. Where's  
the king?

GENT. Contending with the  
fretful elements; —  
Bids the wind blow the earth into  
the sea,

Or swell the curled waters 'bove  
the main,

That things might change or  
cease; tears his white hair,

Which the impetuous blasts, with eyeless rage,  
Catch in their fury, and make nothing of;

6 *main*] mainland

7-15 *tears his white hair . . . what will take all*] This passage is  
omitted from the Folios. It occurs only in the Quartos.

Strives in his little world of man to out-scorn 10  
 The to-and-fro-conflicting wind and rain.  
 This night, wherein the cub-drawn bear would couch,  
 The lion and the belly-pinched wolf  
 Keep their fur dry, unbonneted he runs,  
 And bids what will take all.

KENT. But who is with him?

GENT. None but the fool; who labours to out-jest  
 His heart-struck injuries.

KENT. Sir, I do know you;  
 And dare, upon the warrant of my note,  
 Commend a dear thing to you. There is division,  
 Although as yet the face of it be cover'd 20  
 With mutual cunning, 'twixt Albany and Cornwall;  
 Who have — as who have not, that their great stars  
 Throned and set high? — servants, who seem no less,

8 *eyeless*] blind, undiscerning

9 *make nothing of*] toss about irreverently.

10 *his little world of man*] Elizabethans were very fond of comparing man  
 to a little world or microcosm. Cf *2 Hen. IV*, IV, iii, 107: "this little  
 kingdom, man."

12 *cub-drawn*] sucked dry by the cubs, and thereby rendered hungry and  
 ferocious.

13 *belly-pinched*] ravenous

15 *what will take all*] a common exclamation of hopeless despair.

18 *upon the warrant of my note*] on the strength of my knowledge of you.  
 Thus the Folios. For *note* the Quartos read *Art*, which is hardly  
 intelligible.

19 *a dear thing*] an urgent, desperate matter.

22-29 *Who have . . . furnishings*] These lines are omitted from the  
 Quartos. They appear only in the Folios.

22-23 *as who . . . set high?*] as what persons have not, whose eminent  
 fortune has ever elevated them to thrones.

Which are to France the spies and speculations  
 Intelligent of our state; what hath been seen,  
 Either in snuffs and packings of the dukes,  
 Or the hard rein which both of them have borne  
 Against the old kind king, or something deeper,  
 Whereof perchance these are but furnishings, —  
 But true it is, from France there comes a power 30  
 Into this scatter'd kingdom; who already,  
 Wise in our negligence, have secret feet  
 In some of our best ports, and are at point  
 To show their open banner. Now to you:  
 If on my credit you dare build so far  
 To make your speed to Dover, you shall find  
 Some that will thank you, making just report  
 Of how unnatural and bemadding sorrow  
 The king hath cause to plain.  
 I am a gentleman of blood and breeding, 40  
 And from some knowledge and assurance offer  
 This office to you.

24-28 *speculations* . . *king*] observers giving intelligence about our political affairs; reporting what has been noticed either in the matter of the jealous quarrels and underhand intrigues of the dukes one against another or the cruel tyranny which both have exerted on the kind old king. "Speculations" is another instance of the abstract used for the concrete. Cf II, iv, 147, *supra*.

29 *furnishings*] trimmings, appendages

30-42 *But true* . . *to you*] These lines are omitted from the Folios. They are found only in the Quartos.

30 *a power*] a military force.

31 *scatter'd*] divided, disunited.

32 *have secret feet*] have secretly set foot. Cf. III, iii, 13, *infra*. "a power already footed"

33-34 *at point To show*] on the point of showing.

# KING LEAR

## ACT III

GENT. I will talk further with you.

KENT. No, do not.

For confirmation that I am much more  
Than my out-wall, open this purse and take  
What it contains. If you shall see Cordelia, —  
As fear not but you shall, — show her this ring,  
And she will tell you who your fellow is  
That yet you do not know. Fie on this storm!  
I will go seek the king.

GENT. Give me your hand: 50

Have you no more to say?

KENT. Few words, but, to effect, more than all yet;  
That when we have found the king, — in which your  
pain  
That way, I'll this, — he that first lights on him  
Holla the other. *[Exeunt severally.]*

### SCENE II.—ANOTHER PART OF THE HEATH

#### STORM STILL

*Enter LEAR and Fool*

LEAR. Blow, winds, and crack your cheeks! rage!  
blow!

You cataracts and hurricanoes, spout

45 *out-wall*] exterior.

48 *your fellow*] your present companion.

52 *to effect*] in effect, in importance.

53–54 *in which your pain . . . I'll this*] in which your endeavours shall  
take that way, while I'll take this direction.

2 *cataracts and hurricanoes*] cataracts of water falling from the heavens,

Till you have drench'd our steeples, drown'd the cocks!  
 Your sulphurous and thought-executing fires,  
 Vaunt-couriers to oak-cleaving thunderbolts,  
 Singe my white head! And thou, all-shaking thunder,  
 Smite flat the thick rotundity o' the world!  
 Crack nature's moulds, all germins spill at once  
 That make ingrateful man!

FOOL. O nuncle, court holy-water in a dry house is <sup>10</sup>  
 better than this rain-water out o' door. Good nuncle,  
 in, and ask thy daughters' blessing: here's a night pities  
 neither wise man nor fool.

LEAR. Rumble thy bellyful! Spit, fire! spout, rain!  
 Nor rain, wind, thunder, fire, are my daughters:  
 I tax not you, you elements, with unkindness;  
 I never gave your kingdom, call'd you children,  
 You owe me no subscription: then let fall  
 Your horrible pleasure; here I stand, your slave,  
 A poor, infirm, weak and despised old man: 20

and waterspouts in the sea. Cf. *Troil and Cress*, "V, ii, 169-170:  
 "the dreadful spout Which shipman do the *hurricane* call."

3 *cocks*] the cocks on the tops of steeples.

4 *thought-executing*] working with the rapidity of thought.

5 *Vaunt-couriers*] Heralds, forerunners.

8 *germins*] seeds. Cf. *Macb*, IV, i, 59: "nature's *germins* tumble all  
 together," and see for the whole passage, *Wint Tale*, IV, iv, 470-471:  
 "Let *nature crush the sides o' the earth together*, And mar the seeds  
 within."

10 *court holy-water*] flattering speeches. Cotgrave (*French-Eng. Dict*)  
 gives under "Eau" the French phrase "*eau beniste de Cour*," which  
 he explains as "*Court holy water*, compliments . . . glosing, soothing,  
 palpable cogging"

18 *subscription*] allegiance.



But yet I call you servile ministers,  
That have with two pernicious daughters join'd  
Your high-engender'd battles 'gainst a head  
So old and white as this. O! O! 't is foul!

FOOL. He that has a house to put's head in has a  
good head-piece.

The cod-piece that will house  
Before the head has any,  
The head and he shall louse  
So beggars marry many.  
The man that makes his toe  
What he his heart should make  
Shall of a corn cry woe,  
And turn his sleep to wake.

30

For there was never yet fair woman but she made  
mouths in a glass.

LEAR. No, I will be the pattern of all patience;  
I will say nothing.

23 *high-engender'd battles*] armies bred on high (*i. e.*, in the sky);  
battalions recruited in the heavens.

27 *cod-piece*] a conspicuous part of masculine attire among Elizabethans.  
The fool's semi-intelligible verse suggests here that he who provides  
an asylum for the least worthy object about him before he takes meas-  
ures to safeguard his worthier self is likely to incur filthy disgrace.

29 *louse*] suffer from lice.

30 *So beggars marry many*] A proverbial phrase, with some barely relevant  
allusion here to the plague of insect-parasites that beggars invite by  
their wholesale breaches of strict monogamic law.

31-34 *The man . . . wake*] The general meaning is that the man who  
cherishes a mean part of his being, instead of a really vital part, is  
likely to suffer pain from the very part to which he shows the unwise  
preference.

*Enter KENT*

KENT. Who's there?

FOOL. Marry, here's grace and a cod-piece; that's a  
wise man and a fool.

KENT. Alas, sir, are you here? things that love night  
Love not such nights as these; the wrathful skies  
Gallow the very wanderers of the dark,  
And make them keep their caves: since I was man,  
Such sheets of fire, such bursts of horrid thunder,  
Such groans of roaring wind and rain, I never  
Remember to have heard: man's nature cannot carry  
The affliction nor the fear.

LEAR. Let the great gods,  
That keep this dreadful pother o'er our heads, 50  
Find out their enemies now. Tremble, thou wretch,  
That hast within thee undivulged crimes,  
Unwhipp'd of justice: hide thee, thou bloody hand;  
Thou perjured, and thou simular man of virtue  
That art incestuous: caitiff, to pieces shake.

40 *grace*] an allusion to the expression "king's grace," the ordinary form of address to a sovereign.

*cod-piece*] The fool calls himself by this name, because among professional fools this part of their dress was usually exceptionally exaggerated.

42 *are you*] Thus the Folios. The Quartos read *sit you*.

44 *Gallow*] Frighten; a rare form of the archaic "gally." Both forms survive in dialects.

48 *carry*] bear, endure.

50 *pother*] Thus the First Quarto. The Second and Third Quartos read *Thundring* The Folios substitute *pudder*, a variant form of "pother"

54 *simular*] simulating Cf. *Cymb.*, V, v, 200, "with *simular* proof." The Folios omit *man*, treating "simular" as equivalent to "simulator."

That under covert and convenient seeming  
 Hast practised on man's life: close pent-up guilts,  
 Rive your concealing continents and cry  
 These dreadful summoners grace. I am a man  
 More sinn'd against than sinning.

KENT. Alack, bare-headed! 60

Gracious my lord, hard by here is a hovel;  
 Some friendship will it lend you 'gainst the tempest:  
 Repose you there; while I to this hard house —  
 More harder than the stones whereof 't is raised;  
 Which even but now, demanding after you,  
 Denied me to come in — return, and force  
 Their scant'd courtesies.

LEAR. My wits begin to turn.  
 Come on, my boy: how dost, my boy? art cold?  
 I am cold myself. Where is this straw, my fellow?  
 The art of our necessities is strange, 70  
 That can make vile things precious. Come, your hovel.  
 Poor fool and knave, I have one part in my heart  
 That's sorry yet for thee.

FOOL. [*Singing*]

He that has and a little tiny wit, —  
 With hey, ho, the wind and the rain, —  
 Must make content with his fortunes fit,  
 For the rain it raineth every day.

56 *seeming*] hypocrisy.

58–59 *Rive . . . grace*] Break the bounds of your concealment (*i.e.*, come out into the open) and ask pardon of these dread officers summoning you to justice.

70 *art*] alchemical art, which transmutes the base into the precious metals

74–77 *He that has . . . every day*] The burden in the second and fourth

LEAR. True, my good boy. Come, bring us to this  
 , hovel. *[Exeunt Lear and Kent.]*

FOOL. This is a brave night to cool a courtesan. I'll  
 speak a prophecy ere I go: 80

When priests are more in word than matter;  
 When brewers mar their malt with water;  
 When nobles are their tailors' tutors;  
 No heretics burn'd, but wenches' suitors;  
 When every case in law is right;  
 No squire in debt, nor no poor knight;  
 When slanders do not live in tongues,  
 Nor cutpurses come not to throngs;  
 When usurers tell their gold i' the field,  
 And bawds and whores do churches build; 90  
 Then shall the realm of Albion  
 Come to great confusion:  
 Then comes the time, who lives to see 't,  
 That going shall be used with feet.

This prophecy Merlin shall make; for I live before his  
 time. *[Exit.]*

lines of the song occur in the clown's concluding song, *Tw Night*, V, i, 375, *seq.* of which the first line "When that I was and a little tiny boy" resembles the first line of the fool's song here. In both lines "and" is a common expletive.

79-96 *This . . . time [Exit]* This passage only appears in the Folios. It is omitted from the Quartos.

81-94 *When priests . . . with feet* These lines are adapted, after the manner of parody, from a popular piece of mediæval verse often called *Chaucer's prophecy*, although there is small ground for assigning it to Chaucer. The piece is quoted inaccurately in Puttenham's *Art of English Poesie*, 1589 (ed Arber, p. 232)

84 *burn'd, but wenches' suitors*] an allusion to the fever of venereal disease.

95 *Merlin*] The prophet of Arthurian romance, to whom was popularly

## SCENE III — GLOUCESTER'S CASTLE

*Enter GLOUCESTER and EDMUND*

GLOU. Alack, alack, Edmund, I like not this unnatural dealing. When I desired their leave that I might pity him, they took from me the use of mine own house; charged me, on pain of their perpetual displeasure, neither to speak of him, entreat for him, nor any way sustain him.

EDM. Most savage and unnatural!

GLOU. Go to; say you nothing. There's a division betwixt the dukes, and a worse matter than that: I have received a letter this night; 't is dangerous to be spoken; 10 I have locked the letter in my closet: these injuries the king now bears will be revenged home; there is part ~~of a power already footed~~; we must incline to the king. I will seek him and privily relieve him: go you, and maintain talk with the duke, that my charity be not of him perceived: if he ask for me, I am ill and gone to bed. Though I die for it, as no less is threatened me, the king my old master must be relieved. There is some strange thing toward, Edmund; pray you, be careful.

[*Exit.* 20]

---

assigned many current prophetic utterances. Cf. 1 *Hen. IV.* III, i, 150: "the dreamer *Merlin* and his prophecies"

13 [footed] Thus the Folios The Quartos read *landed*, which gives the requisite sense. Cf. III, i, 32, *supra*: "a power . . . who already . . . have secret *feet*."

EDM. This courtesy, forbid thee, shall the duke  
 Instantly know, and of that letter too:  
 This seems a fair deserving, and must draw me  
 That which my father loses; no less than all:  
 'The younger rises when the old doth fall. [Exit.

## SCENE IV — THE HEATH

## BEFORE A HOVEL

*Enter LEAR, KENT, and Fool*

KENT. Here is the place, my lord: good my lord,  
 enter:  
 The tyranny of the open night's too rough  
 For nature to endure. [Storm still.

LEAR. Let me alone.

KENT. Good my lord, enter here.

LEAR. Wilt break my heart?

KENT. I had rather break mine own. Good my lord,  
 enter.

LEAR. Thou think'st 't is much that this contentious  
 storm  
 Invades us to the skin: so 't is to thee;  
 But where the greater malady is fix'd  
 The lesser is scarce felt. Thou'ldst shun a bear,

21 *forbid thee*] which has been forbidden thee.

23 *a fair deserving*] an action deserving fair recognition.

### ACT III

The body's delicate: the tempest in my mind  
Doth from my senses take all feeling else  
Save what beats there. Filial ingratitude!  
Is it not as this mouth should tear this hand  
For lifting food to 't? But I will punish home.  
No, I will weep no more. In such a night  
To shut me out! Pour on; I will endure.  
In such a night as this! O Regan, Goneril!  
Your old kind father, whose frank heart gave you all, — 20  
O, that way madness lies; let me shun that;  
No more of that.

LEAR. Prithee, go in thyself; seek thine own ease:

[Fool goes in.]

Poor naked wretches, wheresoe'er you are,  
That bide the pelting of this pitiless storm,  
How shall your houseless heads and unfed sides,  
Your loop'd and window'd raggedness, defend you

11-12 *When the mind's . . . delicate*] When the mind's free from care  
the body is sensitive to every outward pain.

26-27 *In, boy . . . sleep*] These lines are omitted from the Quartos.

26 *poverty*] poor creature, pauper, beggar; another instance of the abstract for the concrete Cf. II, iv, 147, and III, i, 24, *supra*.

31 *loop'd and window'd*] full of holes and apertures.

From seasons such as these? O, I have ta'en  
 Too little care of this! Take physic, pomp;  
 Expose thyself to feel what wretches feel,  
 That thou mayst shake the superflux to them  
 And show the heavens more just.

EDG. [*Within*] Fathom and half, fathom and half!  
 Poor Tom! [*The Fool runs out from the hovel.*]

FOOL. Come not in here, nuncle, here's a spirit. Help  
 me, help me! 40

KENT. Give me thy hand. Who's there?

FOOL. A spirit, a spirit: he says his name's poor Tom.

KENT. What art thou that dost grumble there i' the  
 straw?

Come forth.

*Enter EDGAR disguised as a madman*

EDG. Away! the foul fiend follows me!

Through the sharp hawthorn blows the cold wind.  
 Hum! go to thy cold bed and warm thee.

LEAR. Hast thou given all to thy two daughters? and  
 art thou come to this?

EDG. Who gives any thing to poor Tom? whom the 50  
 foul fiend hath led through fire and through flame,  
 through ford and whirlpool, o'er bog and quagmire;  
 that hath laid knives under his pillow and halters in his

37 *Fathom and half*] Probably Edgar refers to the depth of the flood of  
 rain from which he is taking refuge in the hovel

47 *go . . . warm thee*] This colloquial ejaculation appears also in *T. of  
 Shrew*, Induction, I, 8.

53-54 *laid knives . . . pew*] The devil was popularly credited with plac-



pew; set ratsbane by his porridge; made him proud of heart, to ride on a bay trotting-horse over four-inched bridges, to course his own shadow for a traitor. Bless thy five wits! Tom's a-cold. O, do de, do de, do de. Bless thee from whirlwinds, star-blasting, and taking! Do poor Tom some charity, whom the foul fiend vexes. There could I have him now, and there, and there again, 60 and there. [Storm still.]

LEAR. What, have his daughters brought him to this pass?

Couldst thou save nothing? Didst thou give them all?

FOOL. Nay, he reserved a blanket, else we had been all shamed.

LEAR. Now, all the plagues that in the pendulous air Hang fated o'er men's faults light on thy daughters!

ing such temptations to suicide in the way of possessed or insane persons. Shakespeare would seem to have been acquainted with ~~Samuel~~ Harsnet's "*A Declaration of egregious Popish Impostures* . . . under the pretence of Casting out devils Practised by . . . a Jesuit and divers Romish priests" (London, 1603, quarto). Harsnet quotes evidence to show that the devil was represented by an obvious trick to have placed within reach of an alleged lunatic "a new halter and two blades of knives" Shakespeare would seem to have derived from Harsnet the names of all the so-called demons or devils, whom Edgar mentions below.

57 *five wits*] The "wits" were reckoned of the same number as the senses. Cf. III, vi, 55, *infra*, and cf. *Tw. Night*, IV, ii, 83, and note.

*O, do de, do de, do de*] An onomatopoeic expression of shivering. The words are omitted from the Quartos. Cf. III, vi, 73, *infra*.

58 *taking*] bewitchment, infection by witches. Cf. II, iv, 162, *supra*: "You taking airs."

66-67 *Now, all the plagues . . . daughters*] Cf. *Tim. of Ath.*, IV, iii, 108-

KENT. He hath no daughters, sir.

LEAR. Death, traitor! nothing could have subdued  
nature

To such a lowness but his unkind daughters. 70

Is it the fashion that discarded fathers

Should have thus little mercy on their flesh?

Judicious punishment! 't was this flesh begot

Those pelican daughters.

EDG.                Pillicock sat on Pillicock-hill:  
                      Halloo, halloo, loo, loo!

FOOL. This cold night will turn us all to fools and  
madmen:

EDG. Take heed o' the foul fiend: obey thy parents;  
keep thy word justly; swear not; commit not with man's 80  
sworn spouse; set not thy sweet heart on proud array.  
Tom's a-cold.

LEAR. What hast thou been?

EDG. A serving-man, proud in heart and mind; that  
curled my hair; wore gloves in my cap; served the lust  
of my mistress' heart and did the act of darkness with

110: "Be as a planetary plague, when Jove Will o'er some high-  
viced city hang his poison In the sick air "

72 *little mercy on their flesh*] apparently a reference to the pins or thorns  
which crazy beggars stuck in their flesh; cf. II, iii, 15-16, *supra*

74 *pelican daughters*] The young of the pelican was commonly credited  
with drinking its parent's blood

75 *Pillicock . . . Pillicock-hill*] A nursery rhyme "Pillicock," which had an  
\* indelicate meaning, was often used as a term of endearment for children.

85 *wore gloves in my cap*] Mistresses' favours often took the form of gloves  
and were worn in the admirers' caps Cressida begs Troilus wear  
her glove. Cf. *Troil. and Cress*, IV, iv, 73.

her; swore as many oaths as I spake words and broke them in the sweet face of heaven: one that slept in, the contriving of lust and waked to do it: wine loved I deeply, dice dearly, and in woman out-paramoured the <sup>90</sup> Turk: false of heart, light of ear, bloody of hand; hog in sloth, fox in stealth, wolf in greediness, dog in madness, lion in prey. Let not the creaking of shoes nor the rustling of silks betray thy poor heart to woman: keep thy foot out of brothels, thy hand out of plackets, thy pen from lenders' books, and defy the foul fiend.

"Still through the hawthorn blows the cold wind."

Says suum, mun, ha, no, nonny.

Dolphin my boy, my boy, sessa! let him trot by. 99

[*Storm still.*]

LEAR. Why, thou wert better in thy grave than to answer with thy uncovered body this extremity of the

91 *light of ear*] credulous of slanderous gossip or of obscenity.

<sup>15</sup> *plackets*] the apertures in petticoats.

97-99 *Still through . . . trot by*] The Globe text first printed these lines as verse. The early editions give them as prose.

98 *Says suum . . . nonny*] A combination due to Steevens, of the Folio reading *sayes, suum, mun, monny* and the Quarto reading *hay no on ny*.

"Hey nonny nonny" was a common burden of a song. Cf. *Much Ado*, II, iii, 64.

99 *Dolphin my boy*] An almost meaningless colloquial form of address which appears in Ben Jonson's *Bartholomew Fair* (Act V, Sc iii), as "Dauphin my boy." Steevens doubtfully assigned the phrase to a popular ballad. The dolphin was often cited as a type of beauty. Cf. "A Merry Knack to know a Knave" (1594), "fairer than the *dolphin's eye*." Dodsley's *Old Plays*, ed. Hazlitt, Vol. VI, p. 514.

*sessa*] an interjection enjoining silence. See III, vi, 73, *infra*, and note on *T. of Shrew*, Induction, I, 5

skies. Is man no more than this? Consider him well. Thou owest the worm no silk, the beast no hide, the sheep no wool, the cat no perfume. Ha! here's three on's are sophisticated. Thou art the thing itself: unaccommodated man is no more but such a poor, bare, forked animal as thou art. Off, off, you lendings! come, unbutton here. *[Tearing off his clothes.]*

FOOL. Prithee, nuncle, be contented; 't is a naughty night to swim in. Now a little fire in a wild field were like an old lecher's heart, a small spark, all the rest on's body cold. Look, here comes a walking fire. 112

*Enter GLOUCESTER, with a torch*

EDG. This is the foul fiend Flibbertigibbet: he begins at curfew and walks till the first cock; he gives the web and the pin, squints the eye and makes the hare-lip; mildews the white wheat and hurts the poor creature of earth.

104 *the cat*] the perfumed civet cat.

105 *sophisticated*] artificially made up (by wearing clothes).

106 *unaccommodated*] unfurnished with artificial equipment.

107 *forked*] two-pronged, two-legged.

*lendings*] borrowed clothes

112 *here comes a walking fire*] a reference to Gloucester's approach with a torch.

113 *Flibbertigibbet*] a traditional name of an imp or demon mentioned by

• Harsnet. See note on lines 53-54, *supra*.

115 *the web and the pin*] cataract of the eye. Cf. *Wint. Tale*, I, ii, 291:

"pin and web." •

116 *the white wheat*] the ripening wheat.

# KING LEAR

## ACT III

Saint Withold footed thrice the 'old;  
 He met the night-mare and her nine-fold;  
     Bid her alight,  
     And her troth plight,  
 And aroint thee, witch, aroint thee!

120

KENT. How fares your grace?

LEAR. What's he?

KENT. Who's there? What is't you seek?

GLOU. What are you there? Your names?

EDG. Poor Tom, that eats the swimming frog, the toad, the tadpole, the wall-newt and the water; that in the fury of his heart, when the foul fiend rages, eats crow-dung for sallats; swallows the old rat and the ditch-dog; drinks the green mantle of the standing pool; who is whipped from tithing to tithing, and stock-punished, and imprisoned; who hath had three suits to his back, six shirts to his body, horse to ride and weapon to wear;

118 *Saint Withold* . . . 'old] For Saint Withold the Quartos read *Swithold*, and the Folios *Swithold*. "Sweet Swithold of thy lenity" is invoked by a friar in *The Troublesome Raigne of King John* (Six Old Plays, 1779, I, 256). No such saint apparently is noticed elsewhere, but he has been doubtfully identified with Saint Vitalis, who seems to have been invoked against nightmares. "The 'old" clearly stands for "the wold," low-lying country.

119 *nine-fold*] nine foals.

122 *aroint thee*] begone. Cf. *Macb.*, I, iii, 6: "'Aroint thee, witch!'" and note.

128 *the water*] the water-newt. "Newt" is commonly applied to the lizard.

130 *for sallats*] by way of salads.

132 *tithing*] district or parish.

But mice and rats and such small deer  
Have been Tom's food for seven long year.

Beware my follower. Peace, Smulkin; peace, thou fiend!

GLOU. What, hath your grace no better company?

EDG. The prince of darkness is a gentleman: Modo  
he's call'd, and Mahu. 140

GLOU. Our flesh and blood is grown so vile, my lord,  
That it doth hate what gets it.

EDG. Poor Tom's a-cold.

GLOU. Go in with me: my duty cannot suffer  
To obey in all your daughters' hard commands:  
Though their injunction be to bar my doors  
And let this tyrannous night take hold upon you,  
Yet have I ventured to come seek you out  
And bring you where both fire and food is ready.

LEAR. First let me talk with this philosopher. 150  
What is the cause of thunder?

KENT. Good my lord, take his offer; go into the house.

LEAR. I'll talk a word with this same learned Theban.  
What is your study?

135-136 *But mice and rats . . . seven long year*] The lines are cited with slight modifications from the mediæval metrical romance of Bevis of Hampton; "deer" means game.

137 *Smulkin*] the name of one of the fiends noticed, like "Modo" and "Mahu," lines 139, 140, *infra*, by Harsnet See note on lines 53, 54, *supra*.

142 *gets*] begets. Gloucester, who similarly uses "got" for "begot" (II, i, 80, *supra*), is reflecting on the undutifulness of his son Edgar, whom he does not recognise in his disguise, as well as on that of Lear's daughters.

153 *learned Theban*] an ironical incoherence. A Theban or Bœotian—Thebes was the chief city of Bœotia—commonly connotes stupidity.

# KING LEAR

## ACT III

EDG. How to prevent the fiend and to kill vermin.

LEAR. Let me ask you one word in private.

KENT. Importune him once more to go, my lord;  
His wits begin to unsettle.

GLOU. Canst thou blame him? [Storm still.

His daughters seek his death: ah, that good Kent!  
He said it would be thus, poor banish'd man! 160  
Thou say'st the king grows mad; I'll tell thee, friend,  
I am almost mad myself: I had a son,  
Now outlaw'd from my blood; he sought my life,  
But lately, very late: I loved him, friend,  
No father his son dearer: truth to tell thee,  
The grief hath crazed my wits. What a night's  
this!

I do beseech your grace, —

LEAR. O, cry you mercy, sir.

Noble philosopher, your company.

EDG. Tom's a-cold.

GLOU. In, fellow, there, into the hovel: keep thee  
warm. 170

LEAR. Come, let's in all.

KENT. This way, my lord.

LEAR. With him;

I will keep still with my philosopher.

KENT. Good my lord, soothe him; let him take the  
fellow.

GLOU. Take him you on.

KENT. Sirrah, come on; go along with us.

163 *outlaw'd from my blood*] disowned and disinherited.

LEAR. Come, good Athenian.

GLOU. No words, no words: hush.

EDG. Child Rowland to the dark tower came:

His word was still "Fie, foh, and fum,

I smell the blood of a British man." [Exeunt. 180]

### SCENE V — GLOUCESTER'S CASTLE

*Enter CORNWALL and EDMUND*

CORN. I will have my revenge ere I depart his house.

EDM. How, my lord, I may be censured, that nature thus gives way to loyalty, something fears me to think of.

178-180 *Child Rowland . . . British man*] These lines are probably scraps from one or (it may be) two old ballads, which are not positively known to have been handed down in full. Doubt exists as to the antiquity and authenticity of an extant Scottish ballad called "Child Roland and Burd Ellen," dealing with an heroic rescue by the "Child Roland" of his sister Ellen from a giant's enchantment. This ballad in its present shape contains the lines "with fie, fie, fo and fum, I smell the blood of a Christian man," but they are possibly based on Shakespeare's lines. (Cf. Child, *Ballads*, I, 245) The words "Fy, fa, fum, I smell the blood of an English-man," are quoted as too familiar a colloquialism to deserve discussion, in Nashe's *Have with you to Saffron Walden*, 1596. (Nashe's Works, ed McKerrow, III, 37). They possibly belong to an early (lost) version of a nursery ballad of Jack the Giant Killer, of which Child Roland may perhaps have been the hero's original name; but precise evidence is lacking. For Shakespeare's use of "British" here in place of English see IV, vi, 252, *infra*, and note.

2-3 *How, my lord . . . fears me to think of*] I am somewhat afraid, my lord, of the opinion that may be formed of me, in that I sacrifice my filial feeling to my sense of loyalty to you



CORN. I now perceive, it was not altogether your brother's evil disposition made him seek his death, but a provoking merit, set a-work by a reproveable badness in himself.

EDM. How malicious is my fortune, that I must repent to be just! This is the letter he spoke of, which approves him an intelligent party to the advantages of 10 France. O heavens! that this treason were not, or not I the detector!

CORN. Go with me to the duchess.

EDM. If the matter of this paper be certain, you have mighty business in hand.

CORN. True or false, it hath made thee earl of Gloucester. Seek out where thy father is, that he may be ready for our apprehension.

EDM. [*Aside*] If I find him comforting the king, it will stuff his suspicion more fully. — I will persevere in my 20 course of loyalty, though the conflict be sore between that and my blood.

CORN. I will lay trust upon thee, and thou shalt find a dearer father in my love. [*Exeunt.*]

---

6-7 *a provoking merit . . . in himself*] a certain measure of virtue, which prompted action, being set in motion by a reprehensible depravity in his father's own nature.

10 *an intelligent party*] an informer, a spy.

19 *comforting*] supporting (as a legal accessory); the word is used in its legal sense.

22 *my blood*] my natural feeling.

SCENE VI—A CHAMBER IN A FARMHOUSE  
ADJOINING THE CASTLE

*Enter GLOUCESTER, LEAR, KENT, Fool, and EDGAR*

GLOU. Here is better than the open air; take it thankfully. I will piece out the comfort with what addition I can: I will not be long from you.

KENT. All the power of his wits have given way to his impatience: the gods reward your kindness!

*[Exit Gloucester.]*

EDG. Frateretto calls me, and tells me Nero is an angler in the lake of darkness. Pray, innocent, and beware the foul fiend.

FOOL. Prithee, nuncle, tell me whether a madman be a gentleman or a yeoman. 10

LEAR. A king, a king!

FOOL. No, he's a yeoman that has a gentleman to his son, for he's a mad yeoman that sees his son a gentleman before him.

LEAR. To have a thousand with red burning spits  
Come hissing in upon 'em, —

6 *Frateretto*] The name of a fiend in Harsnet. See note on III, iv, 53-54, *supra*.

6-7 *Nero . . . darkness*] According to Rabelais (*Pantagruel*, II, 30) Trajan in hell was an angler for frogs, while Nero was there as a fiddler. Possibly Shakespeare was thinking confusedly of Rabelais' remark. There seems no historic ground for describing Nero as an angler.

12-15 *No, he's a yeoman . . . before him*] This speech of the fool is omitted from the Quartos; it is only found in the Folios.

# KING LEAR

## ACT III

EDG. The foul fiend bites my back.

FOOL. He's mad that trusts in the tameness of a wolf,  
a horse's health, a boy's love, or a whore's oath.

LEAR. It shall be done; I will arraign them straight.<sup>20</sup>  
[To Edgar] Come, sit thou here, most learned justicer;  
[To the Fool] Thou, sapient sir, sit here. Now, you she  
foxes!

EDG. Look, where he stands and glares! Wantest  
thou eyes at trial, madam?

FOOL. Come o'er the bourn, Bessy, to me.  
Her boat hath a leak,  
And she must not speak  
Why she dares not come over to thee.

EDG. The foul fiend haunts poor Tom in the voice of  
a nightingale. Hopdance cries in Tom's belly for two<sup>30</sup>

17-55 *The foul fiend* . . . *let her 'scape*] This passage occurs only in the Quartos; it is omitted from the Folios.

19 *a horse's health*] A horse's health was notoriously held to be uncertain. Cf. *T. of Shrew*, III, ii, 46, *seq.*, for a long list of diseases to which horses were subject. Cf. *ibid.*, I, ii, 79. "as many diseases as two and fifty horses."

21 *justicer*] justiciar, judge of a high court. Theobald's emendation of the Quarto reading *iustice*, which might possibly be retained. But cf. *Cymb.*, V, v, 214: "some upright *justicer*."

23-24 *Wantest thou eyes at trial, madam?*] These words are crazily addressed to Goneril or her sister ("she-foxes"), and implies that the woman who is on her trial fails to see the fiend who "stands and glares"

25 *Come o'er the bourn, Bessy, to me*] The first line of a popular ballad, dating certainly as early as Henry VIII's reign. The music is also preserved. Cf. Rimbault's *Songs and Ballads*, 1851, pp. 71-76. The Quartos wrongly read *broome* for *bourn* (i. e., brook).

30 *Hopdance*] Pope's spelling of the Quarto *Hoppedance*. Harsnet men-

white herring. Croak not, black angel; I have no food for thee.

KENT. How do you, sir? Stand you not so amazed: Will you lie down and rest upon the cushions?

• LEAR. I'll see their trial first. Bring in the evidence. [To Edgar] Thou robed man of justice, take thy place; [To the Fool] And thou, his yoke-fellow of equity, Bench by his side. [To Kent] You are o' the commission; Sit you too.

EDG. Let us deal justly.

40

Sleepest or wakest thou, jolly shepherd?

• Thy sheep be in the corn;

And for one blast of thy minikin mouth,

Thy sheep shall take no harm.

Pur! the cat is gray.

LEAR. Arraign her first; 't is Goneril. I here take my oath before this honourable assembly, she kicked the poor king her father.

FOOL. Come hither, mistress. Is your name Goneril?

tions a fiend called Hobberdidaunce, who figures IV, i, 61, *infra*, as Hobbidence. See note on III, iv, 53-54, *supra*.

31 *white herring*] more often used for fresh herring than pickled herring

36 *robed*] Edgar is wrapped in a blanket; see III, iv, 65, *supra*.

38 *the commission*] the commission of justices of the peace.

41-44 *Sleepest . . . harm*] Possibly a stanza from some unidentified popular song of the day. Many early ballads contain the expression "sleep you, wake you." Cf. Percy's Folio MS., Vol I, p. 70.

43 *minikin*] pretty, dainty.

45 *Pur! . . . gray*] A demon is designated "Purre" by Harsnet But Edgar may only be imitating a cat, with a suggestion that he, like the animal, is too "gray" (*i. e.*, too old) to sing.

LEAR. She cannot deny it.

50

FOOL. Cry you mercy, I took you for a joint-stool.

LEAR. And here's another, whose warp'd looks proclaim

What store her heart is made on. Stop her there!

Arms, arms, sword, fire! Corruption in the place!

False justicer, why hast thou let her 'scape?

EDG. Bless thy five wits!

KENT. O pity! Sir, where is the patience now,  
That you so oft have boasted to retain?

EDG. [*Aside*] My tears begin to take his part so much,  
They'll mar my counterfeiting.

60

LEAR. The little dogs and all,

Tray, Blanch, and Sweet-heart, see, they bark at me.

EDG. Tom will throw his head at them. Avaunt, you curs!

Be thy mouth or black or white,

Tooth that poisons if it bite;

Mastiff, greyhound, mongrel grim,

Hound or spaniel, brach or lym,

Or bobtail tike or trundle-tail,

Tom will make them weep and wail:

70

51 *I took you for a joint-stool*] A proverbial phrase for a mock apology.

A "joint-stool" was a folding stool. See note on *T. of Shrew*, II, i, 197.

52-53 *whose warp'd looks . . . made on*] whose perverse expression shows what stuff her heart is made of.

56 *five wits*] See note on III, iv, 57, *supra*.

68 *brach or lym*] bitch hound or bloodhound *Lym* is Hanmer's correction of the Quarto reading *him* and the Folio *Hym*. "Lymmer" or "limehound" was a term applied to the bloodhound, which was always led by a "leam," or "liam," i. e., a leather thong or heavy leash. For "brach," cf. I, iv, 111, *supra*.

69 *trundle-tail*] a dog with a curled tail.

For, with throwing thus my head,  
Dogs leap the hatch, and all are fled.

Do de, de, de. Sessa! Come, march to wakes and fairs  
and market-towns. Poor Tom, thy horn is dry.

LEAR. Then let them anatomize Regan; see what  
breeds about her heart. Is there any cause in nature  
that makes these hard hearts? [*To Edgar*] You, sir, I  
entertain for one of my hundred; only I do not like the  
fashion of your garments. You will say they are Persian  
attire; but let them be changed. 80

KENT. Now, good my lord, lie here and rest awhile.

LEAR. Make no noise, make no noise; draw the cur-  
tains: so, so, so. We'll go to supper i' the morning.  
So, so, so.

FOOL. And I'll go to bed at noon.

*Re-enter GLOUCESTER*

GLOU. Come hither, friend: where is the king my  
master?

KENT. Here, sir; but trouble him not: his wits are  
gone.

72 *the hatch*] the half-door.

73 *Do, de, de, de*] See note III, iv, 57, *supra*.

*Sessa*] See III, iv, 99, *supra*, and note on *T of Shrew*, Induction, I, 5.

74 *horn*] a drinking-cup of horn usually carried by beggars.

79-80 *Persian attire*] perhaps a reminiscence of Horace, *Odes*, Bk. I, Ode  
xxxviii: "Persicos apparatus," i. e., the gorgeous robes of the East.

85 *And . . . noon*] This speech is omitted from the Quartos. These are  
the last words spoken by the fool in the play. The expression is often  
used to describe an easy way of life. It seems to lack recondite  
significance.

GLOU. Good friend, I prithee, take him in thy arms;  
 I have o'erheard a plot of death upon him:  
 There is a litter ready; lay him in't, 90  
 And drive toward Dover, friend, where thou shalt meet.  
 Both welcome and protection. Take up thy master:  
 If thou shouldst dally half an hour, his life,  
 With thine and all that offer to defend him,  
 Stand in assured loss. Take up, take up,  
 And follow me, that will to some provision  
 Give thee quick conduct.

KENT. Oppressed nature sleeps.  
 This rest might yet have balm'd thy broken sinews,  
 Which, if convenience will not allow,  
 Stand in hard cure. [*To the Fool*] Come, help to bear  
 thy master; 100  
 Thou must not stay behind.

GLOU. Come, come, away.  
[*Exeunt all but Edgar.*]

EDG. When we our betters see bearing our woes,  
 We scarcely think our miseries our foes.

---

89 *upon him*] against him.

95 *Stand in assured loss*] Are exposed to certain ruin. No uncommon construction. Cf. "Stand in hard cure" (line 100, *infra*).

97-101 *Oppressed . . . behind*] This speech is omitted from the Folios.

98 *broken sinews*] shattered nerves.

100 *Stand in hard cure*] Must prove difficult to cure. Cf., for the expression, line 95, *supra*: "Stand in assured loss"

102-115 *When we . . . lurk*] The whole of this soliloquy is omitted from the Folios, and only appears in the Quartos. Doubts have been raised as to Shakespeare's full responsibility for it. But though the sententious rhyming has bathetic effect, parallels are to be found for it in his authentic work.

Who alone suffers suffers most i' the mind,  
 Leaving free things and happy shows behind:  
 But then the mind much sufferance doth o'erskip,  
 When grief hath mates, and bearing fellowship.  
 How light and portable my pain seems now,  
 When that which makes me bend makes the king bow,  
 He childed as I father'd! Tom, away! 110  
 Mark the high noises, and thyself bewray  
 When false opinion, whose wrong thought defiles thee,  
 In thy just proof repeals and reconciles thee.  
 What will hap more to-night, safe 'scape the king!  
 Lurk, lurk, [Exit.

## SCENE VII — GLOUCESTER'S CASTLE

*Enter CORNWALL, REGAN, GONERIL, EDMUND, and Servants*

CORN. Post speedily to my lord your husband; show him this letter: the army of France is landed. Seek out the "traitor Gloucester. • [Exeunt some of the Servants.

REG. Hang him instantly.

105 *free things*] things free of trouble.

107 *bearing*] suffering. The word is a substantive.

110 *He childed as I father'd*] A bold use. Such conversion of substantives into verbs is not uncommon in Shakespeare.

111-114 *Mark the high noises . . . hap more*] Note the loud, ominous signs of approaching disturbance, and betray or declare yourself when that false opinion about you of which the error defiles thee shall in presence of just proof of thy integrity repeal the dishonourable verdict and recall thee to the life of honour now denied thee. Whatever further happens, etc.

2 *this letter*] The letter which Edmund has already given to Cornwall, III, v, 9, *et seq.*, *supra*.



GON. Pluck out his eyes.

CORN. Leave him to my displeasure. Edmund, keep you our sister company: the revenges we are bound to take upon your traitorous father are not fit for your beholding. Advise the duke, where you are going, to a most festinate preparation: we are bound to the like. 10 Our posts shall be swift and intelligent betwixt us. Farewell, dear sister: farewell, my lord of Gloucester.

*Enter OSWALD*

How now! where's the king?

Osw. My lord of Gloucester hath convey'd him hence:

Some five or six and thirty of his knights,  
Hot questrists after him, met him at gate;  
Who, with some other of the lords dependants,  
Are gone with him toward Dover; where they boast  
To have well-armed friends.

CORN. Get horses for your mistress.

7 *bound*] prepared, committed. So in line 10, *infra*. Cf. *Hamlet*, I, v, 6: "Speak; I am *bound* to hear."

10 *festinate*] hurried; a pedantic word. Cf. *L. L. L.*, III, i, 6: "festinately."

11 *intelligent*] giving full information. Cf. III, i, 25, *supra*

12 *my lord of Gloucester*] These words are addressed to Edmund, whom Cornwall somewhat prematurely invests with his father's title. Oswald in line 14 applies the title to the father.

16 *questrists*] searchers or pursuers (engaged in the quest); a very rare word.

17 *lords dependants*] Thus the Quartos. The First Folio reads *Lords, dependants*, which gives the right sense. It is likely that these companions of Lear were vassals of Cornwall, who now forsake their allegiance. Pope substituted *lord's dependants*, meaning less satisfactorily Gloucester's followers.

GON. Farewell, sweet lord, and sister.

20

CORN. Edmund, farewell.

*[Exeunt Goneril, Edmund, and Oswald.]*

Go seek the traitor Gloucester.

Pinion him like a thief, bring him before us.

*[Exeunt other Servants.]*

Though well we may not pass upon his life

Without the form of justice, yet our power

Shall do a courtesy to our wrath, which men

May blame but not control. Who's there? the traitor?

*Enter GLOUCESTER, brought in by two or three*

REG. Ingrateful fox! 't is he.

CORN. Bind fast his corky arms.

GLOU. What mean your graces? Good my friends,  
consider

You are my guests: do me no foul play, friends. 30

CORN. Bind him, I say. *[Servants bind him.]*

REG. Hard, hard. O filthy traitor!

GLOU. Unmerciful lady as you are, I'm none.

CORN. To this chair bind him. Villain, thou shalt  
find — *[Regan plucks his beard.]*

GLOU. By the kind gods, 't is most ignobly done  
To pluck me by the beard.

REG. So white, and such a traitor!

GLOU. Naughty lady,  
These hairs which thou dost ravish from my chin

23 *pass upon his life*] pass sentence of death on him.

25 *do a courtesy to*] indulge, gratify.

28 *corky*] sapless, shrivelled with age.

Will quicken and accuse thee: I am 'your host:  
 With robbers' hands my hospitable favours  
 You should not ruffle thus. What will you do? 40

CORN. Come, sir, what letters had you late from  
 France?

REG. Be simple answerer, for we know the truth.

CORN. And what confederacy have you with the  
 traitors

Late footed in the kingdom?

REG. To whose hands have you sent the lunatic king?  
 Speak.

GLOU. I have a letter guessingly set down,  
 Which came from one that's of a neutral heart,  
 And not from one opposed.

CORN. Cunning.

REG. And false.

CORN. Where hast thou sent the king?

GLOU. To Dover. 50

REG. Wherefore to Dover? Wast thou not charged  
 at peril —

CORN. Wherefore to Dover? Let him first answer  
 that.

GLOU. I am tied to the stake, and I must stand the  
 course.

REG. Wherefore to Dover, sir?

38 *quicken*] assume life

39 *my hospitable favours*] the face or features of me your host.

47 *guessingly set down*] written from conjecture.

53 *the course*] the attack; the bout, the onset of dogs baiting the bear,  
 according to the custom of the sport. Cf. *Macb.*, V, vii, 2: "bearlike  
 I must fight *the course*."

GLOU. Because I would not see thy cruel nails  
 Pluck out his poor old eyes, nor thy fierce sister  
 In his anointed flesh stick boarish fangs.  
 • The sea, with such a storm as his bare head  
 • In hell-black night endured, would have buoy'd up,  
 And quench'd the stelled fires: 60  
 Yet, poor old heart, he help the heavens to rain.  
 If wolves had at thy gate howl'd that stern time,  
 Thou shouldst have said, "Good porter, turn the key,"  
 All cruels else subscribed: but I shall see  
 The winged vengeance overtake such children.

CORN. See 't shalt thou never. Fellows, hold the chair.  
 Upon these eyes of thine I'll set my foot.

GLOU. He that will think to live till he be old,  
 Give me some help! O cruel! O you gods!

REG. One side will mock another; the other too. 70

CORN. If you see vengeance —

FIRST SERV. Hold your hand, my lord:  
 I have served you ever since I was a child;

57 *stick*] Thus the Folios. The Quartos read *rash*, a term often applied to the rending of flesh by a boar's tusks.

59 *buoy'd up*] risen up like a buoy, which was sunk in water.

60 *stelled*] probably "fixed," "everlasting." In *Sonnet* xxiv, and *Lucrece*, 1444, "stelled" is found in the sense of "firmly fixed." Theobald less satisfactorily connected "stelled" with "stellatus," *i e*, starry.

62 *stern*] Thus the Folios. The Quartos read *dearne*, *i e*, dreary. Cf. *Pericles*, III, Prol., 15: "a *dern* and painful perch," and note

64 *All cruels else subscribed*] All their cruelty and fierceness in other circumstances being forgiven or condoned. Thus the Quartos. For *subscribed* the Folios read *subscribe*, which it is difficult to interpret, though the phrase might then mean "All other cruel beings in such circumstances yield their ferocity" or "show some humanity."

But better service have I never done you  
Than now to bid you hold.

REG. How now, you dog!

FIRST SERV. If you did wear a beard upon your chin,  
I'd shake it on this quarrel. What do you mean?

CORN. My villain! *[They draw and fight.]*

FIRST SERV. Nay, then, come on, and take the chance  
of anger.

REG. Give me thy sword. A peasant stand up thus!

*[Takes a sword and runs at him behind.]*

FIRST SERV. O, I am slain! My lord, you have one  
eye left

80

To see some mischief on him. O! *[Dies.]*

CORN. Lest it see more, prevent it. Out, vile jelly!  
Where is thy lustre now?

GLOU. All dark and comfortless. Where's my son  
Edmund?

Edmund, enkindle all the sparks of nature,  
To quit this horrid act.

REG. Out, treacherous villain!  
Thou call'st on him that hates thee: it was he  
That made the overture of thy treasons to us;  
Who is too good to pity thee.

76 *What do you mean?*] This inquiry would come more appropriately from Cornwall.

77 *My villain*] My serf; one legally bound to me in ties of servitude.

83 *Where is thy lustre now?*] The barbarity of the episode of the blinding of Gloucester exceeds in horror any other scene in Shakespeare's work. The pity shown by Cornwall's servants barely relieves the repulsiveness of the outrage.

86 *quit*] requite, repay.

88 *overture*] disclosure. Cf. *Wint. Tale*, II, i, 172.

GLOU. O my follies! Then Edgar was abused. 90  
Kind gods, forgive me that, and prosper him!

REG. Go thrust him out at gates, and let him smell  
His way to Dover. [*Exit one with Gloucester.*] How is't,  
my lord? how look you?

CORN. I have received a hurt: follow me, lady.  
Turn out that eyeless villain: throw this slave  
Upon the dunghill. Regan, I bleed apace:  
Untimely comes this hurt: give me your arm.

[*Exit Cornwall, led by Regan.*]

SEC. SERV. I'll never care what wickedness I do,  
If this man come to good.

THIRD SERV. If she live long,  
And in the end meet the old course of death, 100  
Women will all turn monsters.

SEC. SERV. Let's follow the old earl, and get the  
Bedlam  
To lead him where he would: his roguish madness  
Allows itself to any thing.

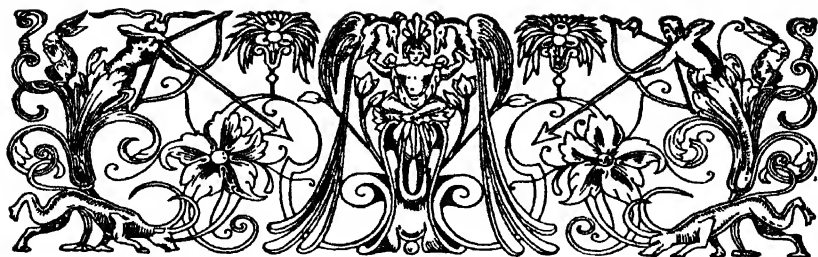
THIRD SERV. Go thou: I'll fetch some flax and  
whites of eggs  
To apply to his bleeding face. Now, heaven help him!  
[*Exeunt severally.*]

98-106 *I'll never care . . . heaven help him*] These lines are omitted  
from the Folios, and only appear in the Quartos.

100 *old*] natural, familiar.

102 *the Bedlam*] the crazy beggar, Edgar. Cf I, ii, 129-130, and II,  
iii, 14, *supra* With a slight inconsistency Gloucester figures in the  
next scene in charge not of Edgar, but of a faithful old tenant, and  
meets Edgar apparently by accident.

104 *Allows itself*] Adapts itself, is amenable.

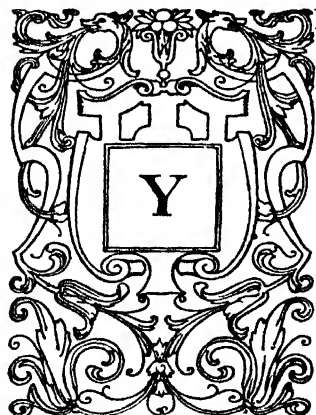


## ACT FOURTH — SCENE I

### THE HEATH

*Enter EDGAR*

EDGAR



YET BETTER THUS, AND  
known to be condemn'd,  
Than still condemn'd and flat-  
ter'd. To be worst,  
The lowest and most dejected  
thing of fortune,  
Stands still in esperance, lives  
not in fear:  
The lamentable change is from  
the best;  
The worst returns to laughter.  
Welcome then,  
Thou unsubstantial air that I  
embrace!

The wretch that thou hast blown unto the worst  
Owes nothing to thy blasts. But who comes here?

1-2 *Yet better . . . flutter'd*] The general meaning is, "It is better to know that one is condemned than for one to be really condemned and at the same time to be treated with false flattery which conceals the

*Enter GLOUCESTER, led by an Old Man*

My father, poorly led? World, world, O world! 10  
But that thy strange mutations make us hate thee,  
Life would not yield to age.

OLD MAN. O, my good lord, I have been your tenant,  
and your father's tenant, these fourscore years.

GLOU. Away, get thee away; good friend, be gone:  
Thy comforts can do me no good at all;  
Thee they may hurt.

OLD MAN. Alack, sir, you cannot see your way.

GLOU. I have no way and therefore want no eyes;  
I stumbled when I saw: full oft 't is seen, 20  
Our means secure us, and our mere defects  
Prove our commodities. Ah, dear son Edgar,

---

truth" Johnson's proposal to substitute *unknown* for *and known* conflicts with the context.

3 *most dejected thing*] thing cast down to the lowest depth.

4 *esperance*] French word for "hope."

5-6 *The lamentable change . . . laughter*] Change from the best fortune gives cause for lamentation, change from fortune when at the worst implies recovery, a return to something which makes for gaiety.

6-9 *Welcome . . . thy blasts*] This passage is omitted from the Quartos, and appears only in the Folios

10-12 *O world! . . . age*] O world, if reverses of fortune did not make us condemn existence altogether, we should never resign ourselves to the hateful incidents of infirm age. In other words, the world with all its uncertainties of fortune is such a repellent object to us that it is a trifling matter whether we are young or old, strong or weak

21-22 *Our means secure us . . . commodities*] The very possession of resources or capacities renders us careless in using them, and our very deficiencies or weaknesses cause us to employ such care as to make them of advantage to us. In other words, Gloucester means that when he had eyes he used them so carelessly as to stumble, now that he is



# KING LEAR

ACT IV

The food of thy abused father's wrath!  
Might I but live to see thee in my touch,  
I'd say I had eyes again!

OLD MAN. How now! Who's there?

EDG. [*Aside*] O gods! Who is 't can say "I am at  
the worst"?

I am worse than e'er I was.

OLD MAN. 'T is poor mad Tom.

EDG. [*Aside*] And worse I may be yet: the worst is not  
So long as we can say "This is the worst."

OLD MAN. Fellow, where goest?

GLOU. Is it a beggar-man? 30

OLD MAN. Madman and beggar too.

GLOU. He has some reason, else he could not beg.  
I' the last night's storm I such a fellow saw,  
Which made me think a man a worm: my son  
Came then into my mind, and yet my mind  
Was then scarce friends with him: I have heard more  
since.

As flies to wanton boys, are we to the gods;  
They kill us for their sport.

EDG. [*Aside*] How should this be?

Bad is the trade that must play fool to sorrow,  
Angering itself and others. Bless thee, master! 40

blind he must be so watchful of his steps that he is likely to avoid  
stumbling. "Secure," which is commonly used adjectively as "care-  
less," means as a verb "to render careless." Cf. *Tim. of Ath.*, II, ii,  
177: "Secure thy heart."

23 *abused*] deceived.

38 *kill*] Thus the Folios. The Quartos read, hardly intelligibly, *bitt* or *bit*.

39-40 *play fool to sorrow . . . others*] divert sorrow by making merri-  
ment, whereby the distress is aggravated to the general vexation.

GLOU. Is that the naked fellow?

OLD MAN. Ay, my lord.

GLOU. Then, prithee, get thee gone: if for my sake  
Thou wilt o'ertake us hence a mile or twain  
I' the way toward Dover, do it for ancient love;  
And bring some covering for this naked soul,  
Who I'll entreat to lead me.

OLD MAN. Alack, sir, he is mad.

GLOU. 'T is the times' plague, when madmen lead the  
blind.

Do as I bid thee, or rather do thy pleasure;  
Above the rest, be gone.

OLD MAN. I'll bring him the best 'parel that I have, 50  
Come on 't what will. [Exit.]

GLOU. Sirrah, naked fellow, —

EDG. Poor Tom's a-cold. [Aside] I cannot daub it  
further.

GLOU. Come hither, fellow.

EDG. [Aside] And yet I must. — Bless thy sweet eyes,  
they bleed.

GLOU. Know'st thou the way to Dover?

EDG. Both stile and gate, horse-way and foot-path.  
Poor Tom hath been scared out of his good wits. Bless  
thee, good man's son, from the foul fiend! Five fiends  
have been in poor Tom at once; of lust, as Obidicut; 60

53 *daub*] disguise.

59-64 *Five fiends . . . bless thee, master*] These lines are omitted from  
the Folios, and appear only in the Quartos.

60-62 *Obidicut . . . Flibbertigibbet*] The names of all these five fiends  
are adapted from Harsnet (see III, iv, 154, *supra*), though *Obidicut*  
is spelt by Harsnet *Hoberdicut*.

Hobbididence, prince of dumbness; Mahu, of stealing; Modo, of murder; Flibbertigibbet, of mopping and mowing; who since possesses chambermaids and waiting-women. So, bless thee, master!

GLOU. Here, take this purse, thou whom the heavens' plagues

Have humbled to all strokes: that I am wretched  
Makes thee the happier. Heavens, deal so still!

Let the superfluous and lust-dieted man,

That slaves your ordinance, that will not see

Because he doth not feel, feel your power quickly; 70

So distribution should undo excess

And each man have enough. Dost thou know Dover?

EDG. Ay, master.

GLOU. There is a cliff whose high and bending head  
Looks fearfully in the confined deep:

Bring me but to the very brim of it,

And I'll repair the misery thou dost bear

With something rich about me: from that place

I shall no leading need.

EDG.

Give me thy arm:

Poor Tom shall lead thee.

[*Exeunt.* 80]

62-63 *mopping and mowing*] grinning and grimacing (like an ape).

68-69 *the superfluous . . . ordinance*] the man surfeited with superfluous luxuries, and fed up by inordinate lusts, who makes the divine ordinances his slave by treating them as subservient to his pleasure.

70 *feel*] *sc.* pain, suffer.

## SCENE II — BEFORE THE DUKE OF ALBANY'S PALACE

*Enter GONERIL and EDMUND*

GON. Welcome, my lord: I marvel our mild husband  
Not met us on the way.

*Enter OSWALD*

Now, where's your master?

Osw. Madam, within; but never man so changed.  
I told him of the army that was landed;  
He smiled at it: I told him you were coming;  
His answer was, "The worse:" of Gloucester's treachery  
And the loyal service of his son  
When inform'd him, then he call'd me sot  
And told me I had turn'd the wrong side out:  
What most he should dislike seems pleasant to him;  
What best, off-sett live. 10

GON. [*To Edm.*] Then shall you go no further.  
It is the coward's fear of his spirit,  
That dares not undertake: he'll not feel wrongs,  
Which tie him to an answer. Our wishes on the way

1 *Welcome, my lord*] Edmund has escorted Goneril home See III, vii, 12-21, *supra*. She now welcomes him on entering her house.

8 *sot*] fool.

9 *turn'd the wrong side out*] completely misinterpreted the facts.

13-14 *he'll not feel* . . . *answer*] he'll take no notice of injuries which  
• will require of him retaliation

14-15 *Our wishes* . . . *effects*] 'The things we wished for when talking of them on the road may come to pass. The reference is to the murder of Goneril's husband, Albany.

# KING LEAR

ACT IV

May prove effects. Back, Edmund, to my brother;  
 Hasten his musters and conduct his powers:  
 I must change arms at home and give the distaff  
 Into my husband's hands. This trusty servant  
 Shall pass between us: ere long you are like to hear,  
 If you dare venture in your own behalf, 20  
 A mistress's command. Wear this; spare speech;

[*Giving a favour.*]

Decline your head: this kiss, if it durst speak,  
 Would stretch thy spirits up into the air:  
 Conceive, and fare thee well.

EDM. Yours in the ranks of death.

GON. My most dear Gloucester!  
 [*Exit Edmund.*]

O, the difference of man and man!  
 To thee a woman's services are due:  
 My fool usurps my body.

OSW. Madam, here comes my lord.  
 [*Exit.*]

Enter ALBANY

GON. I have been worth the whistle.

ALB. 'O Goneril!

You are not worth the dust which the rude wind 30  
 Blows in your face. I fear your disposition:  
 That nature which contemns it origin

17 *change arms*] exchange implements (*i. e.*, spears for spindles).

29 *I have been worth the whistle*] an adaptation of the common proverb,  
 "A poor dog is not worth the whistling." Goneril was wont to receive  
 an elaborate welcome on her return home.

31-50 *I fear your disposition . . . Like monsters of the deep*] These lines  
 are omitted from the Folios, and appear only in the Quartos.

32-33 *That nature . . . in itself*] That disposition which contemns its

Cannot be border'd certain in itself;  
 She, that herself will sliver and disbranch  
 From her material sap, perforce must wither  
 And come to deadly use.

GON. No more; the text is foolish.

ALB. Wisdom and goodness to the vile seem vile:  
 Filths savour but themselves. What have you done?  
 Tigers, not daughters, what have you perform'd? 40  
 A father, and a gracious aged man,  
 Whose reverence even the head-lugg'd bear would lick,  
 Most barbarous, most degenerate! have you maddened.  
 Could my good brother suffer you to do it?  
 A man, a prince, by him so benefited!  
 If that the heavens do not their visible spirits  
 Send quickly down to tame these vile offences,  
 It will come,  
 Humanity must perforce prey on itself,  
 Like monsters of the deep.

GON. Milk-liver'd man! 50  
 That bear'st a cheek for blows, a head for wrongs;

parentage cannot be restrained within any fixed bounds (of law and order). *It origin* is the reading of (most copies of) the First Quarto and of the Second Quarto. The Third Quarto has the more modern form *its*.

35 *material sap*] sap giving essential nourishment.

36 *deadly use*] the use fitted for a thing that is dead, as in the case of dead wood, which is fit only for burning

39° *Filths . . . themselves*] Filthy things only have a taste for filthy things

42 *the head-lugg'd bear*] the bear dragged about by a cord round its head, and thereby infuriated.

43 *maddened*] made mad, maddened

Who hast not in thy brows an eye discerning  
Thine honour from thy suffering; that not know'st  
Fools do those villains pity who are punish'd  
Ere they have done their mischief. Where's thy drum? ·  
France spreads his banners in our noiseless land,  
With plumed helm thy state begins to threat,  
Whiles thou, a moral fool, sit'st still and criest  
"Alack, why does he so?"

ALB. See thyself, devil!  
Proper deformity seems not in the fiend 60  
So horrid as in woman.

GON. O vain fool!

ALB. Thou changed and self-cover'd thing, for shame,  
Be-monster not thy feature. Were't my fitness  
To let these hands obey my blood,

52-55 *Who hast not . . . mischief*] Whose eyes are not able to distinguish  
the injury to thy honour in tamely suffering wrong; who dost not  
know that only fools show pity for those wretches who are punished  
before they have wrought the mischief they have designed

53-59 *that not know'st . . . does he so?*] This passage is omitted from the  
Folios, and appears only in the Quartos

57 *thy state begins to threat*] Jennens' emendation of the First Quarto read-  
ing *thy state begins thereat* and the later Quartos' reading *thy slaver*  
*begins threats*.

58 *moral*] moralising.

60-61 *Proper deformity . . . woman*] Innate deformity or depravity  
seems not to be so horrible in the devil as in a woman.

62-68 *Thou changed . . . mew!*] These lines are omitted from the Folios  
62 *self-cover'd*] having your self or real personality covered or concealed  
(by a woman's shape). Cf. lines 66-67, *infra* Albany means that  
Goneril, his wife, is really a fiend, whose form is exchanged with and  
concealed by "a woman's shape."

64 *blood*] disposition or impulse.

They are apt enough to dislocate and tear  
 Thy flesh and bones: howe'er thou art a fiend,  
 A woman's shape doth shield thee.

GON. Marry, your manhood! mew!

*Enter a Messenger*

ALB. What news?

MESS. O, my good lord, the Duke of Cornwall's  
 dead,

70

Slain by his servant, going to put out  
 The other eye of Gloucester.

ALB. . Gloucester's eyes!

MESS. A servant that he bred, thrill'd with remorse,  
 Opposed against the act, bending his sword  
 To his great master; who thereat enraged  
 Flew on him and amongst them fell'd him dead,  
 But not without that harmful stroke which since  
 Hath pluck'd him after.

ALB. This shows you are above,  
 You justicers, that these our nether crimes

68 *manhood! mew!*] Some copies of the First Quarto read *manhood mew* —; others *manhood now* —, a reading substantially followed by the later Quartos *Marry, your manhood now!* would mean that Goneril, who at line 50 had called her husband “milk-liver'd,” now taunts him with his boast of manhood *Your manhood mew* would mean “restrain your manhood” If the two notes of exclamation be admitted as in the text here, “mew” is a derisive interjection,  
 \* for the use of which there is ample contemporary authority.

73 *remorse*] compassion.

74–75 *bending* . . . *To*] directing . . . at.

79 *justicers*] judges. Cf. III, vi, 23, *supra*.



So speedily can venge. But, O poor Gloucester! 80  
Lost he his other eye?

MESS. Both, both, my lord.  
This letter, madam, craves a speedy answer;  
'T is from your sister.

GON. [Aside] One way I like this well;  
But being widow, and my Gloucester with her,  
May all the building in my fancy pluck  
Upon my hateful life: another way,  
The news is not so tart. — I'll read, and answer. [Exit.

ALB. Where was his son when they did take his eyes?

MESS. Come with my lady hither.

ALB. He is not here.

MESS. No, my good lord; I met him back again. 90

ALB. Knows he the wickedness?

MESS. Ay, my good lord; 't was he inform'd against  
him,

And quit the house on purpose, that their punishment  
Might have the freer course.

ALB. Gloucester, I live  
To thank thee for the love thou show'dst the king,  
And to revenge thine eyes. Come hither, friend:  
Tell me what more thou know'st. [Exeunt.

83-86 *One way . . . hateful life*] Goneril's cruelty approves the death of Cornwall and the blinding of Gloucester. But seeing that her sister is now a widow and Edmund, whom she calls by his father's title, "my Gloucester," is in her sister's company, she fears that the design of killing her own husband and of thus opening the road to her own union with Edmund may be foiled, and that the castle of her imagination may fall and crush her own life, which in its present condition is loathsome to her.

90 *back again*] on his way back.

## SCENE III — THE FRENCH CAMP NEAR DOVER

*Enter KENT and a Gentleman*

KENT. Why the King of France is so suddenly gone back know you the reason?

GENT. Something he left imperfect in the state which since his coming forth is thought of, which imports to the kingdom so much fear and danger that his personal return was most required and necessary.

KENT. Who hath he left behind him general?

GENT. The Marshal of France, Monsieur La Far.

KENT. Did your letters pierce the queen to any demonstration of grief? 10

GENT. Ay, sir; she took them, read them in my presence,

And now and then an ample tear trill'd down  
Her delicate cheek: it seem'd she was a queen  
O'er her passion, who most rebel-like  
Sought to be king o'er her.

KENT. O, then it moved her.

GENT. Not to a rage: patience and sorrow strove  
Who should express her goodliest. You have seen  
Sunshine and rain at once: her smiles and tears

SCENE III] The whole of this scene is omitted from the Folios It appears only in the Quartos.

(stage direction) *a Gentleman*] Cf III, i, *supra*, where this gentleman was ordered to Dover to inform the French king and Cordelia of Lear's misfortunes

12 *trill'd*] trickled.

# KING LEAR

## ACT IV

Were like a better way: those happy smiles  
That play'd on her ripe lip seem'd not to know 20  
What guests were in her eyes; which parted thence  
As pearls from diamonds dropp'd. In brief,  
Sorrow would be a rarity most beloved,  
If all could so become it.

KENT. Made she no verbal question?

GENT. Faith, once or twice she heaved the name of  
"father"

Pantingly forth, as if it press'd her heart;  
Cried "Sisters! sisters! Shame of ladies! sisters!  
Kent! father! sisters! What, i' the storm? i' the night?  
Let pity not be believed!" There she shook  
The holy water from her heavenly eyes, 30  
And clamour moisten'd: then away she started  
To deal with grief alone.

KENT. It is the stars,  
The stars above us, govern our conditions;  
Else one self mate and mate could not beget  
Such different issues. You spoke not with her since?

---

19 *Were like a better way*] Had an effect of greater beauty than even the concurrence of sunshine and rain could produce. The reading is much disputed. Theobald accepted Warburton's absurd alteration *Were like a wetter May*. Another conjecture *Were like an April day* is, at any rate, unobjectionable

20 *seem'd*] Pope's emendation of the Quarto reading *seeme*.

31 *clamour moisten'd*] Capell's emendation of the Quarto reading *clamour moistened her*. The words would mean that tears allayed her utterance, and stayed it from clamorous lamentation.

34 *self mate and mate*] the same husband and wife. Thus the Second and Third Quartos. The First Quarto reads *self mate and make*, "make" being a somewhat archaic word for "partner."

GENT. No.

KENT. Was this before the king return'd?

GENT. No, since.

KENT. Well, sir, the poor distressed Lear's i' the town;

Who sometime in his better tune remembers  
What we are come about, and by no means  
Will yield to see his daughter.

40

GENT. Why, good sir?

KENT. A sovereign shame so elbows him: his own  
unkindness

That stripp'd her from his benediction, turn'd her  
To foreign casualties, gave her dear rights  
To his dog-hearted daughters: these things sting  
His mind so venomously that burning shame  
Detains him from Cordelia.

GENT. Alack, poor gentleman!

KENT. Of Albany's and Cornwall's powers you heard  
not?

GENT. 'T is so; they are afoot.

KENT. Well, sir, I'll bring you to our master Lear,  
And leave you to attend him: some dear cause  
Will in concealment wrap me up awhile;  
When I am known aright, you shall not grieve  
Lending me this acquaintance. I pray you, go  
Along with me.

[*Exeunt*]

42 *A sovereign shame . . . him*] A predominant sense of shame thus  
• thrusts him aside (from a reconciliation) The sense is explained in  
lines 46, 47, *infra*, "burning *shame* detains him from Cordelia."

49 *'T is so*] It is the fact that I have heard of them.

51 *some dear cause*] some very good reason.

## SCENE IV — THE SAME

## A TENT

*Enter, with drum and colours, CORDELIA, Doctor, and Soldiers*

COR. Alack, 't is he: why, he was met even now  
 As mad as the vex'd sea; singing aloud;  
 Crown'd with rank fumiter and furrow-weeds,  
 With bur-docks, hemlock, nettles, cuckoo-flowers,  
 Darnel, and all the idle weeds that grow  
 In our sustaining corn. A century send forth;  
 Search every acre in the high-grown field,  
 And bring him to our eye. [*Exit an Officer.*] What can  
 man's wisdom

In the restoring his bereaved sense?  
 He that helps him take all my outward worth. 10

DOCT. There is means, madam:  
 Our foster-nurse of nature is repose,

3-5 *rank fumiter . . . bur-docks . . . cuckoo-flowers, Darnel*] Cf. *Hen. V*, V, ii, 44-46: "her fallow leas The darnel, hemlock and rank fumitory Doth root upon" "Fumiter," i. e., "fumitory," from the French "fumeterre," i. e., earth-smoke, is a common sort of weed, of which there seem to be five species known in England. *Bur-docks* is Hammer's change for the Quarto reading *hordocks* and the Folio reading *Hardokes* or *Hardocks*; "hoardock" is the name of a coarse weed with whitish woolly leaves, which seems closely related to the "burdock," a coarse flower bearing prickly flowerheads called "burs," and having large dock-leaves "Cuckoo flowers" is applied to many plants flowering in the spring, especially "ragged robin"; cf. *L. L. L.*, V, ii, 883, "cuckoo-buds" "Darnel" is raygrass, a weed often found in open corn-fields.

The which he lacks: that to provoke in him,  
Are many simples operative, whose power  
Will close the eye of anguish.

COR. All blest secrets,  
All you unpublish'd virtues of the earth,  
Spring with my tears! be aidant and remediate  
In the good man's distress! Seek, seek for him;  
Lest his ungovern'd rage dissolve the life  
That wants the means to lead it.

*Enter a Messenger*

MESS. News, madam; 20  
The British powers are marching hitherward.

COR. 'T is known before; our preparation stands  
In expectation of them. O dear father,  
It is thy business that I go about;  
Therefore great France  
My mourning and important tears hath pitied.  
No blown ambition doth our arms incite,  
But love, dear love, and our aged father's right:  
Soon may I hear and see him! [*Exeunt.*]

14 *simples*] medicinal herbs

17 *aidant and remediate*] helpful and remedial. "Remediate" is Shakespeare's coinage, on the model of "immediate"

20 *the means to lead it*] the control of reason to guide it.

26 *important tears*] importunate tears. Cf. *All's Well*, III, vii, 21: "important blood"

27. *blown*] inflated.

SCENE V — GLOUCESTER'S CASTLE

*Enter REGAN and OSWALD*

REG. But are my brother's powers set forth?

OSW. Ay, madam.

REG. Himself in person there?

OSW. Madam, with much ado:  
Your sister is the better soldier.

REG. Lord Edmund spake not with your lord at home?

OSW. No, madam.

REG. What might import my sister's letter to him?

OSW. I know not, lady.

REG. Faith, he is posted hence on serious matter.  
It was great ignorance, Gloucester's eyes being out,  
To let him live: where he arrives he moves 10  
All hearts against us: Edmund, I think, is gone,  
In pity of his misery, to dispatch  
His nighted life; moreover, to descry  
The strength o' the enemy.

OSW. I must needs after him, madam, with my letter.

REG. Our troops set forth to-morrow: stay with us;  
The ways are dangerous.

4 *your lord*] Thus the Folios. The Quartos read *your Lady*, which is pointless; for Regan knows that Edmund was her sister Goneril's companion from Gloucester's castle to Albany's palace, and that he had every opportunity of speaking with her on her journey home. Regan's enquiry can only be directed to Edmund's recent relations with Albany, Goneril's husband and Oswald's lord.

13 *nighted*] darkened, gloomy. Cf *Hamlet*, I, ii, 68: "thy *nighted* colour" (i. e., thy gloomy complexion).

OSW. I may not, madam:  
My lady charged my duty in this business.

REG. Why should she write to Edmund? Might not  
you

Transport her purposes by word? Belike, 20  
Something — I know not what: I'll love thee much,  
Let me unseal the letter.

OSW. Madam, I had rather —

REG. I know your lady does not love her husband;  
I am sure of that: and at her late being here  
She gave strange œillades and most speaking looks  
To noble Edmund. I know you are of her bosom.

OSW. I, madam?

REG. I speak in understanding: you are; I know't:  
Therefore I do advise you, take this note:  
My lord is dead; Edmund and I have talk'd; 30  
And more convenient is he for my hand  
Than for your lady's: you may gather more.  
If you do find him, pray you, give him this;  
And when your mistress hears thus much from you,  
I pray, desire her call her wisdom to her.

25 *œillades*] amorous glances, a French word. Cf. *M. Wives*, I, iii, 57.

26 *of her bosom*] in her confidence.

29 *take this note*] usually explained as "take note of this" But in view of the "give him this" of line 33, *infra*, and "take thou this note," V, iii, 28, *infra*, Regan is more likely to be referring to a letter which she now hands to Oswald At IV, vi, 250-258, *infra*, when Oswald dies, "letters" which are in his pockets are twice mentioned, though only one from Goneril to Edmund is actually read out

35 *desire her call her wisdom to her*] an ironical way of advising Goneril to think better of her amour with Edmund.



So, fare you well.

If you do chance to hear of that blind traitor,  
Preferment falls on him that cuts him off.

Osw. Would I could meet him, madam! I should  
show

What party I do follow.

REG. Fare thee well. [Exeunt. 40

SCENE VI — FIELDS NEAR DOVER

*Enter GLOUCESTER, and EDGAR dressed like a peasant*

GLOU. When shall we come to the top of that same  
hill?

EDG. You do climb up it now: look, how we labour.

GLOU. Methinks the ground is even.

EDG. Horrible steep.

Hark, do you hear the sea?

GLOU. No, truly.

EDG. Why then your other senses grow imperfect  
By your eyes' anguish.

GLOU. So may it be indeed:  
Methinks thy voice is alter'd, and thou speak'st  
In better phrase and matter than thou didst.

EDG. You're much deceived: in nothing am I changed  
But in my garments.

38 *Preferment*] Advancement, promotion.

1 *that same hill*] The fine description which follows of the great cliff  
near Dover has caused it to be long christened "The Shakespeare  
Cliff."

GLOU. Methinks you're better spoken. 10

Edg. Come on, sir; here's the place: stand still.

How fearful

And dizzy 't is to cast one's eyes so low!

The crows and choughs that wing the midway air

Show scarce so gross as beetles: half way down

Hangs one that gathers samphire, dreadful trade!

Methinks he seems no bigger than his head:

The fishermen that walk upon the beach

Appear like mice; and yond tall anchoring bark

Diminish'd to her cock; her cock, a buoy

Almost too small for sight: the murmuring surge 20

That on the unnumber'd idle pebbles chafes

Cannot be heard so high. I'll look no more,

Lest my brain turn and the deficient sight

Topple down headlong.

GLOU. Set me where you stand.

Edg. Give me your hand: you are now within a  
foot

Of the extreme verge: for all beneath the moon

Would I not leap upright.

13 *choughs*] jackdaws

15 *samphire*] The early editions read *sampyre*, indicating the pronunciation which still survives in America. It is a rock herb named after St Pierre or St Peter, which is much used for pickling. It is sometimes called "sea-fennel."

19 *cock*] a ship's small boat, often called cock-boat.

21 *unnumber'd*] unnumberable

27 *Would I not leap upright*] The spot is pretended to be so near the edge of the precipice that the utmost peril would be incurred by any leap or rapid movement in an upright posture.

GLOU.                      Let go my hand.

Here, friend, 's another purse; in it a jewel  
Well worth a poor man's taking: fairies and gods  
Prosper it with thee! Go thou further off;  
Bid me farewell, and let me hear thee going.

EDG. Now fare you well, good sir.

GLOU. With all my heart.

EDG. Why I do trifle thus with his despair  
Is done to cure it.

GLOU. [*Kneeling*] O you mighty gods!  
This world I do renounce, and in your sights  
Shake patiently my great affliction off:  
If I could bear it longer and not fall  
To quarrel with your great opposeless wills,  
My snuff and loathed part of nature should  
Burn itself out. If Edgar live, O bless him!  
Now, fellow, fare thee well. 40  
[*He falls forward.*]

**EDG.** Gone, sir: farewell.

And yet I know not how conceit may rob  
The treasury of life, when life itself  
Yields to the theft: had he been where he thought,  
By this had thought been past. Alive or dead?  
Ho, you sir! friend! Hear you, sir! speak!  
Thus might he pass indeed: yet he revives.  
What are you, sir?

GLOU.                    Away, and let me die.

28 *another purse*] Cf IV, i, 65, *supra*, where Gloucester already gives Edgar one of his purses.

39 *snuff*] refuse or dregs.

42 *conceit*] imagination, false impression.

47 *pass*] pass away, die.

EDG. Hadst thou been aught but gossamer, feathers,  
air,

So many fathom down precipitating, 50  
'Thou'dst shiver'd like an egg: but thou dost breathe;  
Hast heavy substance; bleed'st not; speak'st; art  
sound.

Ten masts at each make not the altitude  
Which thou hast perpendicularly fell:  
Thy life's a miracle. Speak yet again.

GLOU. But have I fall'n, or no?

EDG. From the dread summit of this chalky bourn.  
Look up a-height; the shrill-gorged lark so far  
Cannot be seen or heard: do but look up.

GLOU. Alack, I have no eyes. 60  
Is wretchedness deprived that benefit,  
To end itself by death? 'T was yet some comfort,  
When misery could beguile the tyrant's rage  
And frustrate his proud will.

EDG. Give me your arm:  
Up: so. How is't? Feel you your legs? You stand.

GLOU. Too well, too well.

EDG. This is above all strangeness.  
Upon the crown o' the cliff, what thing was that  
Which parted from you?

GLOU. A poor unfortunate beggar.

EDG. As I stood here below, methought his eyes 70  
Were two full moons; he had a thousand noses,

53 *Ten masts at each*] Ten masts fastened end to end.

57 *this chalky bourn*] this boundary of chalk.

58 *shrill-gorged*] shrill-throated.

Horns whelk'd and waved like the enridged sea:  
 It was some fiend; therefore, thou happy father,  
 Think that the clearest gods, who make them honours  
 Of men's impossibilities, have preserved thee.

GLOU. I do remember now: henceforth I'll bear  
 Affliction till it do cry out itself  
 "Enough, enough," and die. That thing you speak of,  
 I took it for a man; often 't would say  
 "The fiend, the fiend:" he led me to that place.

EDG. Bear free and patient thoughts. But who comes  
 here?

80

*Enter LEAR, fantastically dressed with wild flowers*

The safer sense will ne'er accommodate  
 His master thus.

LEAR. No, they cannot touch me for coining; I am  
 the king himself.

EDG. O thou side-piercing sight!

LEAR. Nature's above art in that respect. There's  
 your press-money. That fellow handles his bow like a

71 *whelk'd and waved . . . sea*] twisted or convolved (like the shell of the  
 whelk fish) and fluted like the furrowed sea

73 *clearest*] most pure or righteous

74 *impossibilities*] incapacities, things that men's powers make it impos-  
 sible for them to do.

80 *free*] free from fear.

81-82 *The safer sense . . . thus*] The saner sense or the reason would  
 never allow one in full possession of it to dress himself up thus. "His  
 master" would be in modern grammar "its master."

85 *side-piercing*] piercing the heart.

86-87 *There's your press-money*] Lear imagines himself a recruiting officer  
 handing bounty money to men forcibly impressed.

crow-keeper; draw me a clothier's yard. Look, look, a mouse! Peace, peace; this piece of toasted cheese will do 't. There's my gauntlet; I'll prove it on a giant. 90 Bring up the brown bills. O, well flown, bird! i' the clout, i' the clout: hewgh! Give the word.

EDG. Sweet marjoram.

LEAR. Pass.

GLOU. I know that voice.

LEAR. Ha! Goneril, with a white beard! They flattered me like a dog, and told me I had white hairs in my beard ere the black ones were there. To say "ay" and "no" to every thing that I said! "Ay" and "no" 99 too was no good divinity. When the rain came to wet me once and the wind to make me chatter; when the thunder would not peace at my bidding; there I found 'em, there I smelt 'em out. Go to, they are not men o' their words: they told me I was every thing; 't is a lie, I am not ague-proof.

88 *crow-keeper*] scarecrow; an office sometimes filled by a loutish boy; more often by a clumsy figure resembling a man.

*draw me a clothier's yard*] shoot an arrow the length of a clothier's yard measure. "Me" is the ethic dative

90 *gauntlet*] the leather glove commonly thrown down to invite a challenge.

91 *the brown bills*] the halberdiers, soldiers bearing halberds, which were painted brown to preserve them from rust.

*well flown, bird!*] the falconer's cry to the hawk.

92 *i' the clout*] the cry of the archer who hit the "clout" i. e., the bull's eye or pin fixed in the centre of the butt or target.

*Give the word*] The mad king imagines himself a sentinel demanding the watchword of Edgar.

99-100 "Ay" and "no" . . . *divinity*] Merely to echo my "yes" and "no" had nothing that was good or divine in it. It was mere sycophancy.

GLOU. The trick of that voice I do well remember:  
Is 't not the king?

LEAR. Ay, every inch a king:  
When I do stare, see how the subject quakes.  
I pardon that man's life. What was thy cause?  
Adultery? 110

Thou shalt not die: die for adultery! No:  
The wren goes to 't, and the small gilded fly  
Does lecher in my sight.

Let copulation thrive; for Gloucester's bastard son  
Was kinder to his father than my daughters  
Got 'tween the lawful sheets.

To 't, luxury, pell-mell! for I lack soldiers.  
Behold yond simpering dame,  
Whose face between her forks presages snow,  
That minces virtue and does shake the head 120

To hear of pleasure's name;  
The fitchew, nor the soiled horse, goes to 't  
With a more riotous appetite.

106 *trick*] peculiar note.

109 *thy cause*] the charge brought against thee.

117 *luxury*] lust.

119 *Whose face . . . snow*] Cf. *Tim. of Ath.*, IV, iii, 383-384. "Whose blush doth thaw the consecrated snow That lies on Dian's lap" Lear means that the person of the "simpling dame" suggests coyness "Forks" is equivalent to "legs"; cf. III, iv, 107, *supra*. "a *forked* animal."

120 *minces*] affects with pretence of timidity.

122 *fitchew*] polecat, often applied to a harlot.

*the soiled horse*] the horse turned out to new grass, which rendered him wanton.

Down from the waist they are Centaurs,  
 Though women all above:  
 But to the girdle do the gods inherit,  
 Beneath is all the fiends';  
 There's hell, there's darkness, there's the sulphurous pit,  
 Burning, scalding, stench, consumption; fie, fie, fie!  
 pah, pah! Give me an ounce of civet, good apothecary,  
 to sweeten my imagination: there's money for thee. 131

GLOU. O, let me kiss that hand!

LEAR. Let me wipe it first; it smells of mortality.

GLOU. O ruin'd piece of nature! This great world  
 Shall so wear out to nought. Dost thou know me?

LEAR. I remember thine eyes well enough. Dost  
 thou squiny at me? No, do thy worst, blind Cupid; I'll  
 not love. Read thou this challenge; mark but the pen-  
 ning on't.

GLOU. Were all the letters suns, I could not see one.

EDG. I would not take this from report: it is, 141  
 And my heart breaks at it.

LEAR. Read.

GLOU. What, with the case of eyes?

LEAR. O, ho, are you there with me? No eyes in  
 your head, nor no money in your purse? Your eyes are

124 *Centaurs*] used as the type of sensuality. The Centaurs, according to  
 Ovid, *Metam*, XII, 210, *seq*, were given up to lust and violence.

126 *do the gods inherit*] do the gods possess or own.

130 *civet*] a musky perfume, obtained from the glands of the civet cat. Cf.

•III, iv, 103-104: "thou owest the cat no perfume."

137 *squiny*] look askint.

144 *with the case of eyes*] with the sockets which once held eyes.

145 *are you there with me?*] do you understand me?



in a heavy case, your purse in a light: yet you see how this world goes.

GLOU. I see it feelingly.

149

LEAR. What, art mad? A man may see how this world goes with no eyes. Look with thine ears: see how yond justice rails upon yond simple thief. Hark, in thine ear: change places, and, handy-dandy, which is the justice, which is the thief? Thou hast seen a farmer's dog bark at a beggar?

GLOU. Ay, sir.

LEAR. And the creature run from the cur? There thou mightst behold the great image of authority: a dog's obeyed in office.

Thou rascal beadle, hold thy bloody hand!

160\*

Why dost thou lash that whore? Strip thine own back;

Thou hotly lust'st to use her in that kind

For which thou whip'st her. The usurer hangs the cozener.

Through tatter'd clothes small vices do appear;

Robes and furr'd gowns hide all. Plate sin with gold,

147 *a heavy case*] a sad plight

153 *handy-dandy*] a children's game; sleight of hand in which a thing is rapidly changed from one hand to the other, to the confusion of the onlooker.

163 *The usurer hangs the cozener*] The magistrate, who practises usury, sentences to death the swindler.

164 *small vices*] Thus the Quartos. The Folios read *great vices*, which may give the passage the difficult meaning that vice is always greater when seen through tatters.

165 *furr'd gowns*] For this reference to the merchant-alderman's official dress, cf. *Meas for Meas.*, III, ii, 7

165-170 *Plate sin . . . accuser's lips*] This passage is omitted from the Quartos, and appears only in the Folios.

And the strong lance of justice hurtless breaks;  
 Arm it in rags, a pigmy's straw does pierce it.  
 None does offend, none, I say, none; I'll able 'em:  
 Take that of me, my friend, who have the power  
 To seal the accuser's lips. Get thee glass eyes, 170  
 And, like a scurvy politician, seem  
 To see the things thou dost not.  
 Now, now, now, now: pull off my boots: harder, harder:  
 so.

EDG. O, matter and impertinency mix'd!  
 Reason in madness!

LEAR. If thou wilt weep my fortunes, take my eyes.  
 I know thee well enough; thy name is Gloucester:  
 Thou must be patient; we came crying hither:  
 Thou know'st, the first time that we smell the air, 180  
 We wawl and cry. I will preach to thee: mark.

GLOU. Alack, alack the day!

LEAR. When we are born, we cry that we are come  
 To this great stage of fools. This 's a good block.  
 It were a delicate stratagem, to shoe  
 A troop of horse, with felt: I'll put 't in proof;

168 *I'll able 'em*] I'll answer or vouch for them.

171 *politician*] political intriguer; always used in a depreciatory sense by Shakespeare

175 *impertinency*] irrelevancy.

181 *wawl*] wail or howl.

184 *This's a good block*] All the old editions read substantially *This a good block*. The sentence is difficult. "Block" is frequently used for the mould on which a hat is fashioned, and thus for the hat itself. Lear may be supposed crazily to snatch a hat from the head of a bystander, and, then noticing that it is made of felt, to be led to his next reflection.

# KING LEAR

ACT IV

And when I have stol'n upon these sons-in-law,  
Then, kill, kill, kill, kill, kill, kill!

*Enter a Gentleman, with Attendants*

GENT. O, here he is: lay hand upon him. Sir,  
Your most dear daughter — 190

LEAR. No rescue? What, a prisoner? I am even  
The natural fool of fortune. Use me well;  
You shall have ransom. Let me have a surgeon;  
I am cut to the brains.

GENT. You shall have any thing.

LEAR. No seconds? all myself?  
Why, this would make a man a man of salt,  
To use his eyes for garden water-pots,  
Ay, and laying autumn's dust.

GENT. Good sir, —

LEAR. I will die bravely, like a smug bridegroom.  
What! 200

I will be jovial: come, come; I am a king,  
My masters, know you that.

GENT. You are a royal one, and we obey you.

LEAR. Then there's life in 't. Nay, an you get it,  
you shall get it by running. Sa, sa, sa, sa.

*[Exit running; Attendants follow.]*

GENT. A sight most pitiful in the meanest wretch,

196 *salt*] salt tears

200 *I will die . . . bridegroom*] Cf. *Ant. & Cleop.*, IV, xiv, 99-100: "I will be *A bridegroom in my death*" "*Smug*" means spruce, without any depreciatory sense. Cf. *Merch. of Ven.*, III, i, 39: "so *smug* upon the mart."

205 *Sa, sa, sa, sa*] These syllables represent Lear's panting as he runs. They are omitted from the Quartos.

Past speaking of in a king! Thou hast one daughter,  
 Who redeems nature from the general curse  
 Which twain have brought her to.

EDG. Hail, gentle sir.

GENT. Sir, speed you: what's your will?

EDG. Do you hear aught, sir, of a battle toward? 211

GENT. Most sure and vulgar: every one hears that,  
 Which can distinguish sound.

EDG. But, by your favour,  
 How near's the other army?

GENT. Near and on speedy foot; the main descry  
 Stands on the hourly thought.

EDG. I thank you, sir: that's all.

GENT. Though that the queen on special cause is here,  
 Her army is moved on.

EDG. I thank you, sir. [Exit Gent.]

GLOU. You ever-gentle gods, take my breath from me;  
 Let not my worser spirit tempt me again 220  
 To die before you please!

EDG. Well pray you, father.

GLOU. Now, good sir, what are you?

EDG. A most poor man, made tame to fortune's  
 blows;

212 *vulgar*] generally known.

215-216 *the main descry . . . hourly thought*] it is expected every hour  
 that the main army will be descried. For another usage of "stand  
 on," see V, i, 68-69, *infra*.

221 *father*] a colloquial term of address of a young to an old man. Cf.  
 line 257, *infra*. Gloucester has not yet recognised his son in Edgar

223 *tame to*] Thus the Folios. The Quartos read *lame by*, with which  
 compare *Sonnet xxxvii*, 3: "So I made lame by fortune's dearest spite."

## ACT IV

GLOU.                                Hearty thanks;  
The bounty and the benison of heaven  
To boot, and boot!

*Enter* OSWALD

GLOU. Now let thy friendly hand  
Put strength enough to 't. [*Edgar interposes.*]

EDG. Chill not let go, zir, without vurther 'casion:

Osw. Let go, slave, or thou diest!

EDG. Good gentleman, go your gait, and let poor folk pass. An chud ha' been zwaggerred out of my life,

224-225 *by the art . . . pregnant*] by the tuition of experienced and heartfelt sorrows am readily moved.

226 *biding*] lodging

228 *To boot, and boot*] In addition, and addition; to the fullest possible extent.

231 *Briefly thyself remember*] Quickly recall thy sins and repent.

234 *publish'd* | proclaimed.

237 *Chill*] I will. This south country rustic dialect is ordinarily allotted to rustics on the contemporary stage.

't would not ha' been zo long as 't is by a vortnight. Nay, come not near th' old man; keep out, che vor ye, or I'se try whether your costard or my ballow be the harder: chill be plain with you.

Osw. Out, dunghill! [They fight. 245

EDG. Chill pick your teeth, zir: come; no matter vor your foins. [Oswald falls.

Osw. Slave, thou hast slain me. Villain, take my purse: If ever thou wilt thrive, bury my body; And give the letters which thou find'st about me 250 To Edmund earl of Gloucester; seek him out Upon the British party. O, untimely death! Death! [Dies.

EDG. I know thee well: a serviceable villain, As duteous to the vices of thy mistress As badness would desire.

GLOU. What, is he dead?

EDG. Sit you down, father; rest you.

242 *che vor ye*] I warn you.

243 *your costard or my ballow*] your head or my cudgel.

245 *Out, dunghill*] a common term of opprobrium. Cf. *K. John*, IV, iii, 87: "Out dunghill, darest thou brave a nobleman?"

247 *joins*] thrusts in fencing. Cf. *Much Ado*, V, i, 84. "*joining* fence."

252 *Upon the British party*] Among the British. The Quartos read *British*, while the Folios read *English*. Cf. III, iv, 180, *supra*, where "a *British* man" is read in a passage quoted from an old ballad, which has "*Englishman*" Owing to the accession of James I to the English throne, it was deemed complimentary to the Scottish king to give all his subjects the epithet *British*, and Shakespeare in first drafting the play seems to have respected this punctilio.

255 *duteous*] obsequious, obedient

257 *father*] See note on line 221, *supra*.

Let's see these pockets: the letters that he speaks of  
 May be my friends. He's dead; I am only sorry,  
 He had no other deathsmen. Let us see: 260  
 Leave, gentle wax; and, manners, blame us not:  
 To know our enemies' minds, we'd rip their hearts;  
 Their papers, is more lawful.

[*Reads*] "Let our reciprocal vows be remembered. You have  
 many opportunities to cut him off: if your will want not, time and  
 place will be fruitfully offered. There is nothing done, if he return  
 the conqueror: then am I the prisoner, and his bed my gaol; from  
 the loathed warmth whereof deliver me, and supply the place for  
 your labour."

"Your — wife, so I would say — affectionate servant,  
 "GONERIL." 270

O undistinguish'd space of woman's will!  
 A plot upon her virtuous husband's life;  
 And the exchange my brother! Here, in the sands,  
 Thee I'll rake up, the post unsanctified  
 Of murderous lechers; and in the mature time  
 With this ungracious paper strike the sight  
 Of the death-practised duke: for him 't is well  
 That of thy death and business I can tell.

260 *deathsmen*] executioner.

261 *Leave, gentle wax*] Cf. *Tw. Night*, II, v, 85: "By your *leave, wax*."

269 *servant*] lover, as in the Italian "(cavaliere) servente." Cf. *Two Gent.*,  
 II, i, 97.

271 *undistinguish'd . . . will*] boundless range of woman's desire.

"Will" is constantly used by Shakespeare in the significance of  
 lust. Cf. Lee's *Life of Shakespeare*, Appendix VIII.

274 *rake up*] cover.

277 *death-practised*] whose death is plotted.

GLOU. The king is mad: how stiff is my vile sense,  
 That I stand up, and have ingenious feeling 280  
 Of my huge sorrows! Better I were distract:  
 So should my thoughts be sever'd from my griefs,  
 And woes by wrong imaginations lose  
 The knowledge of themselves. [Drum afar off.]

EDG. Give me your hand:  
 Far off, methinks, I hear the beaten drum:  
 Come, father, I'll bestow you with a friend. [Exeunt.]

SCENE VII — A TENT IN THE FRENCH CAMP LEAR  
 ON A BED ASLEEP, SOFT MUSIC PLAYING;  
 GENTLEMAN, AND OTHERS ATTENDING

*Enter CORDELIA, KENT, and Doctor*

COR. O thou good Kent, how shall I live and work,  
 To match thy goodness? My life will be too short,  
 And every measure fail me.

280 *ingenious feeling*] lively consciousness. •

283 *by wrong imaginations*] by dint of crazy misapprehensions.

Sc. vii (stage direction) *A Tent . . . and Doctor*] These directions are mainly due to Capell. The original editions only indicate here the entrance of Cordelia, with whom the Quartos associate *Kent and Doctor*, and the Folios, *Kent and Gentleman*. The Quartos give no indication at all of Lear's entry, which the Folios do not note until line 20, *infra* (see note). The Folios give to the "Gentleman" the speeches assigned to the "Doctor" by the Quartos. The Quartos specifically allot but one speech (lines 23-25, *infra*) to the "Gentleman," whose presence their stage direction fails to indicate. The first draft of the piece doubtless introduced both a Gentleman and a Doctor in consultation with Cordelia and Kent; a revision of the play made the two parts one



KENT. To be acknowledged, madam, is o'erpaid.  
All my reports go with the modest truth,  
Nor more nor clipp'd, but so.

COR. Be better suited:  
These weeds are memories of those worser hours:  
I prithee, put them off.

KENT. Pardon me, dear madam;  
Yet to be known shortens my made intent:  
My boon I make it, that you know me not 10  
Till time and I think meet.

COR. Then be 't so, my good lord. [*To the Doctor*] How  
does the king?

DOCT. Madam, sleeps still.

COR. O you kind gods,  
Cure this great breach in his abused nature!  
The untuned and jarring senses, O, wind up  
Of this child-changed father!

DOCT. So please your majesty  
That we may wake the king: he hath slept long.

COR. Be govern'd by your knowledge, and proceed  
I' the sway of your own will. Is he array'd? 20

6 *Nor more nor clipp'd, but so*] neither exaggerated nor curtailed, but just  
the truth.

*suit'd*] dressed.

9 *Yet to be known . . . intent*] Yet to be recognised comes short of, pre-  
vents, the due realisation of my deliberately formed aim *Muin* is  
sometimes substituted for the somewhat awkward word *made*. But  
the change is not essential.

17 *child-changed*] either "changed to a child" or "changed by the conduct  
of his children."

20 *Is he array'd?*] The Folios insert here the stage direction, *Enter Lear  
in a chaire carried by Seruants*.

GENT. Ay, madam; in the heaviness of his sleep  
We put fresh garments on him.

DOCT. Be by, good madam, when we do awake him;  
I doubt not of his temperance.

COR. Very well.

DOCT. Please you, draw near. Louder the music there!

COR. O my dear father! Restoration hang  
Thy medicine on my lips, and let this kiss  
Repair those violent harms that my two sisters  
Have in thy reverence made!

KENT. Kind and dear princess!

COR. Had you not been their father, these white flakes so  
Had challenged pity of them. Was this a face  
To be opposed against the warring winds?  
To stand against the deep dread-bolted thunder?  
In the most terrible and nimble stroke  
Of quick, cross lightning? to watch — poor perdu! —

23-24 Doct. *Be by, . . . temperance*] The Folios continue this speech to the "Gentleman." The First Quarto, which like the other Quartos gives the preceding speech to the "Doctor," assigns this to the "Gentleman," who is not otherwise known to the Quarto text. The Second and Third Quartos allot the passage to Kent.

24 *temperance*] sanity, calmness.

24-25 *Very well . . . music there!*] These lines, which appear in the Quartos, are omitted from the Folios.

26-27 *Restoration . . . lips*] Let the curative or restorative powers hang medicine for thee on my lips.

30 *white flakes*] snow-white hair.

33-36 *To stand . . . helm?*] This passage is omitted from the Folios, and appears only in the Quartos.

35 *perdu*] Cotgrave explains "*enfants perdus*" or "*perdus*" as a "forlorn hope of a campe," *i. e.*, soldiers intrusted with very perilous service.

With this thin helm? Mine enemy's dog,  
 Though he had bit me, should have stood that night  
 Against my fire; and wast thou fain, poor father,  
 To hovel thee with swine and rogues forlorn,  
 In short and musty straw? Alack, alack!  
 'Tis wonder that thy life and wits at once  
 Had not concluded all. He wakes; speak to him.

DOCT. Madam, do you; 't is fittest.

COR. How does my royal lord? How fares your  
 majesty?

LEAR. You do me wrong to take me out o' the grave:  
 Thou art a soul in bliss; but I am bound  
 Upon a wheel of fire, that mine own tears  
 Do scald like molten lead.

COR. Sir, do you know me?

LEAR. You are a spirit, I know: when did you die?

COR. Still, still, far wide!

DOCT. He's scarce awake: let him alone awhile.

LEAR. Where have I been? Where am I? Fair  
 daylight?

I am mightily abused. I should e'en die with pity,

The term here applies to a sentinel in a situation of great danger who was often so designated. Cf. Beaumont & Fletcher's *The Little French Lawyer*, II, iii, 3-4: "I am set here like a *perdu* To watch a fellow."

36 *Mine enemy's dog*] Thus the Folios. The Quartos read *mine incurious dog*.

40 *short*] scanty, insufficient.

50 *wide*] astray.

53 *mightily abused*] terribly deceived or imposed upon. Cf. line 77, *infra*, and *Much Ado*, V, ii, 84: "the prince and Claudio *mightily abused*."

To see another thus. I know not what to say.  
 I will not swear these are my hands: let's see;  
 I feel this pin prick. Would I were assured  
 Of my condition!

COR. O, look upon me, sir,  
 And hold your hands in benediction o'er me.  
 No, sir, you must not kneel.

LEAR. Pray, do not mock me:  
 I am a very foolish fond old man, 60  
 Fourscore and upward, not an hour more nor less;  
 And, to deal plainly,  
 I fear I am not in my perfect mind.  
 Methinks I should know you and know this man;  
 Yet I am doubtful; for I am mainly ignorant  
 What place this is, and all the skill I have  
 Remembers not these garments, nor I know not  
 Where I did lodge last night. Do not laugh at me;  
 For, as I am a man, I think this lady  
 To be my child Cordelia.

COR. And so I am, I am. 70

LEAR. Be your tears wet? yes, faith. I pray, weep  
 not:  
 If you have poison for me, I will drink it.  
 I know you do not love me; for your sisters  
 Have, as I do remember, done me wrong:  
 You have some cause, they have not.

COR. No cause, no cause.

61-62 *Fourscore . . . plainly*] The Quartos omit the words *not an hour more or less*, and read the rest as a single line. The words, which the Quartos omit, valuably illustrate Lear's continued mental weakness.

# KING LEAR

ACT IV

LEAR. Am I in France?

KENT. In your own kingdom, sir.

LEAR. Do not abuse me.

DOCT. Be comforted, good madam: the great rage,  
You see, is kill'd in him: and yet it is danger  
To make him even o'er the time he has lost. 80  
Desire him to go in; trouble him no more  
Till further settling.

COR. Will 't please your highness walk?

LEAR. You must bear with me. Pray you now,  
forget and forgive: I am old and foolish.

*[Exeunt all but Kent and Gentleman.]*

GENT. Holds it true, sir, that the Duke of Cornwall  
was so slain?

KENT. Most certain, sir.

GENT. Who is conductor of his people?

KENT. As 't is said, the bastard son of Gloucester. 90

GENT. They say Edgar, his banished son, is with the  
Earl of Kent in Germany.

KENT. Report is changeable. 'Tis time to look  
about; the powers of the kingdom approach apace.

77 *abuse*] deceive. Cf. line 53, *supra*, and note.

79-80 *and yet . . . lost*] These words are omitted from the Folios.

80 *even o'er*] account for, bridge over in his recollection. "Make even with" was commonly used for "settle up with." Cf. *Macb.*, V, viii, 62.

82 *Till further settling*] Till he be calmer. The word "settling" is in harmony with "even o'er" of line 80.

83 *walk*] withdraw.

86-98 *Holds it true . . . battle's fought*] This passage is omitted from the Folios.

GENT. The arbitrement is like to be bloody. Fare  
you well, sir. [Exit.]

KENT. My point and period will be thoroughly  
wrought,  
Or well or ill, as this day's battle 's fought. [Exit.]

---

97-98 *My point and period . . . fought*] The aim and end of my life will  
be fully attained for either good or ill in the course of this day's  
battle.

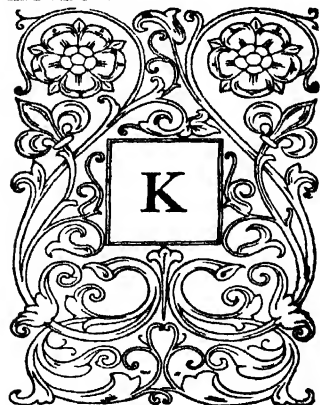


ACT FIFTH — SCENE I

THE BRITISH CAMP NEAR DOVER

*Enter, with drum and colours, EDMUND, REGAN, Gentlemen, and Soldiers*

EDMUND



NOW OF THE DUKE IF  
his last purpose hold,  
Or whether since he is advised  
by aught  
To change the course: he's full  
of alteration  
And self-reproving: bring his  
constant pleasure.

*[To a Gentleman, who goes out.]*

REG. Our sister's man is certainly miscarried.

EDM. 'Tis to be doubted, madam.

REG. Now, sweet lord,

You know the goodness I intend upon you:

4 *constant pleasure*] settled decision.

6 *doubted*] feared.

7 *I intend upon you*] I design for you.

Tell me, but truly, but then speak the truth,  
Do you not love my sister?

EDM. In honour'd love.

REG. But have you never found my brother's way  
To the forfended place? 10

EDM. That thought abuses you.

REG. I am doubtful that you have been conjunct  
And bosom'd with her, as far as we call hers.

EDM. No, by mine honour, madam.

REG. I never shall endure her: dear my lord,  
Be not familiar with her.

EDM. Fear me not. —  
She and the duke her husband!

*Enter, with drum and colours, ALBANY, GONERIL, and Soldiers*

GON. [*Aside*] I had rather lose the battle than that  
sister

Should loosen him and me.

ALB. Our very loving sister, well be-met. 20  
Sir, this I hear; the king is come to his daughter,  
With others whom the rigour of our state  
Forced to cry out. Where I could not be honest,  
I never yet was valiant: for this business,  
It toucheth us, as France invades our land,

11 *forfended*] forbidden.

11-13 *That thought . . . call hers*] This passage is omitted from the Folios.

15 *I never . . . her*] I shall never submit to her capture of you.

23-28 *Where I could not be . . . you speak nobly*] These lines are  
omitted from the Quartos

25-26 *It toucheth . . . the king*] It concerns us, inasmuch as the French  
force is invading our territory, not because our French foe is sup-



# KING LEAR

ACT V

Not bolds the king, with others, whom, I fear,  
Most just and heavy causes make oppose.

EDM. Sir, you speak nobly.

REG. Why is this reason'd?

GON. Combine together 'gainst the enemy;  
For these domestic and particular broils 30  
Are not the question here.

ALB. Let's then determine  
With the ancient of war on our proceedings.

EDM. I shall attend you presently at your tent.

REG. Sister, you'll go with us?

GON. No.

REG. 'Tis most convenient; pray you, go with us.

GON. [*Aside*] O, ho, I know the riddle. — I will go.

*As they are going out, enter EDGAR disguised*

EDG. If e'er your grace had speech with man so poor,  
Hear me one word.

ALB. I'll overtake you. Speak.

*[Exeunt all but Albany and Edgar.]*

EDG. Before you fight the battle, ope this letter. 40  
If you have victory, let the trumpet sound

porting King Lear. "Bolds" is used as a transitive verb meaning  
"encourages," "supports"

28 *reason'd*] discussed, talked about

30 *particular broils*] private broils Thus substantially the Folios. The  
Quartos read *door* (*dore* or *doore*) *particulars*, which is doubtfully ex-  
plained as private affairs or business, at our own doors, or homes.

The Quarto reading looks like a misprint.

32 *ancient of war*] military veterans, those of long experience in warfare.

33 *I shall . . . tent*] This line is omitted from the Folios.

37 *I know the riddle*] I know your game.

For him that brought it: wretched though I seem,  
 I can produce a champion that will prove  
 What is avouched there. If you miscarry,  
 Your business of the world hath so an end,  
 And machination ceases. Fortune love you!

ALB. Stay till I have read the letter.

EDG. I was forbid it.

When time shall serve, let but the herald cry,  
 And I'll appear again.

ALB. Why, fare thee well: I will o'erlook thy paper. 50  
*[Exit Edgar.]*

*Re-enter EDMUND*

EDM. The enemy's in view: draw up your powers.  
 Here is the guess of their true strength and forces  
 By diligent discovery; but your haste  
 Is now urged on you.

ALB. We will greet the time. *[Exit.]*

EDM. To both these sisters have I sworn my love;  
 Each jealous of the other, as the stung  
 Are of the adder. Which of them shall I take?  
 Both? one? of neither? Neither can be enjoy'd,  
 If both remain alive: to take the widow  
 Exasperates, makes mad her sister Goneril; 60  
 And hardly shall I carry out my side,

46 *machination ceases*] the plot or intrigue against you concludes (with your death).

54 *We will greet the time*] We will welcome the occasion, we shall be ready  
 61 *carry out my side*] win my game "Side" is often found as a technical term for a set of partners in a game played by two or more players, and hence was sometimes applied to the game itself or to a bout of play.

# KING LEAR

ACT V

Her husband being alive. Now then we'll use  
His countenance for the battle; which being done,  
Let her who would be rid of him devise  
His speedy taking off. As for the mercy  
Which he intends to Lear and to Cordelia,  
The battle done, and they within our power,  
Shall never see his pardon; for my state  
Stands on me to defend, not to debate. [Exit.]

## SCENE II — A FIELD BETWEEN THE TWO CAMPS

*Alarum within. Enter, with drum and colours, LEAR, CORDELIA,  
and Soldiers, over the stage; and exeunt*

*Enter EDGAR and GLOUCESTER*

EDG. Here, father, take the shadow of this tree  
For your good host; pray that the right may thrive:  
If ever I return to you again,  
I'll bring you comfort.

GLOU. Grace go with you, sir! [Exit Edgar.]

*Alarum and retreat within. Re-enter EDGAR*

EDG. Away, old man; give me thy hand; away!

68-69 *my state . . . debate*] my situation imposes on me the need of active defence, not of talk For a cognate, although not identical use of "Stands on," cf. IV, vi, 216, *supra*. See also "Stand in," III, vi, 95-100, *supra*

5 (stage direction) *Alarum . . . EDGAR*] Thus substantially the Folios. *Within. Re-enter EDGAR* are words omitted by the Quartos This slight and inadequate indication of the battle, in which the Duke of Albany overcomes the French invaders, has been treated by many critics as a serious blemish in the perspicuous development of the

King Lear hath lost, he and his daughter ta'en :

Give me thy hand ; come on.

GLOU. No further, sir ; a man may rot even here.

EDG. What, in ill thoughts again ? Men must endure

. Their going hence, even as their coming hither : 10

Ripeness is all : come on.

GLOU. And that's true too. [*Exeunt*

### SCENE III—THE BRITISH CAMP NEAR DOVER

*Enter, in conquest, with drum and colours, EDMUND ; LEAR and CORDELIA, as prisoners ; Captain, Soldiers, etc.*

EDM. Some officers take them away : good guard,  
Until their greater pleasures first be known  
That are to censure them.

COR. We are not the first  
Who with best meaning have incurr'd the worst.  
For thee, oppressed king, am I cast down ;  
Myself could else out-frown false fortune's frown.  
Shall we not see these daughters and these sisters ?

LEAR. No, no, no, no ! Come ; let's away to prison :  
We two alone will sing like birds i' the cage :  
When thou dost ask me blessing, I'll kneel down 10  
And ask of thee forgiveness : so we'll live,

---

plot. The sympathies of the audience which are already strained to the uttermost on behalf of the suffering Lear and Cordelia, could, however ill endure any emphasis being laid on the defeat of the French champion of Cordelia and her father

•11 *Ripeness is all*] Cf. *Hamlet*, V, ii, 214: "if it be not now yet it will come; the readiness is all."

2-3 *their greater pleasures . . . That are to censure them*] the pleasures or commands of those greater persons who are to judge them.

And pray, and sing, and tell old tales, and laugh  
 At gilded butterflies, and hear poor rogues  
 Talk of court news; and we'll talk with them too,  
 Who loses and who wins, who's in, who's out;  
 And take upon's the mystery of things,  
 As if we were God's spies: and we'll wear out,  
 In a wall'd prison, packs and sects of great ones  
 That ebb and flow by the moon.

EDM.

Take them away.

LEAR. Upon such sacrifices, my Cordelia, 20  
 The gods themselves throw incense. Have I caught thee?  
 He that parts us shall bring a brand from heaven,  
 And fire us hence like foxes. Wipe thine eyes;  
 The good-years shall devour them, flesh and fell,

13 *gilded butterflies*] fashionable courtiers.

16 *take upon's*] undertake inquiry into.

17 *God's spies*] angels commissioned by God to report on the lives of men.

18 *packs and sects*] parties and factions (of politicians).

23 *fire us hence like foxes*] drive us away as foxes are expelled from their holes by burning them out. Cf *Sonnet* cxliv, 14: "Till my bad angel fire my good one out," and Guilpin's *Skaletheia*, 1598 (ed. Grosart, p. 17): "But Ile be loth, wench, to be fired out."

24 *The good-years*] There is no justification for Hanmer's generally accepted suggestion that this expression was a corruption of a French word "*goujères*" which meant venereal diseases. No such French word exists. The colloquial phrase "what the goodyear!" is common in Elizabethan English as an imprecation equivalent to "What the devil?" and suggests that "good year" was popularly used, by an ironical inversion of speech, of any maleficent influence. See note on *M. Wives*, I, iv, 110. "The good years" doubtless means here "the bad powers."

*flesh and fell*] literally "flesh and skin"; colloquially used for "flesh and bones."

## SCENE III

## KING LEAR

Ere they shall make us weep: we'll see 'em starve first.

Come. *[Exeunt Lear and Cordelia, guarded.]*

EDM. Come hither, captain; hark.

Take thou this note: go follow them to prison:

One step I have advanced thee; if thou dost

As this instructs thee, thou dost make thy way 30

To noble fortunes: know thou this, that men

Are as the time is: to be tender-minded

Does not become a sword: thy great employment

Will not bear question; either say thou'lt do't,

Or thrive by other means.

CAPT. I'll do't, my lord.

EDM. About it; and write happy when thou hast  
done.

Mark; I say, instantly, and carry it so

As I have set it down.

CAPT. I cannot draw a cart, nor eat dried oats;

If it be man's work, I'll do't. *[Exit. 40]*

*Flourish. Enter ALBANY, GONERIL, REGAN, another Captain, and  
Soldiers*

ALB. Sir, you have shown to-day your valiant strain,  
And fortune led you well: you have the captives  
That were the opposites of this day's strife:

28 *this note*] the warrant for the execution of Lear and Cordelia.

34 *Will not bear question*] Will not admit of discussion

36 *write happy*] deem yourself fortunate

39-40 *I cannot draw . . . do't*] These lines are omitted from the Folios.

41 *strain*] lineage.

43 *the opposites*] the persons opposed to us, our enemies.

# KING LEAR

ACT V

We do require them of you, so to use them  
As we shall find their merits and our safety  
May equally determine.

EDM. Sir, I thought it fit  
To send the old and miserable king  
To some retention and appointed guard;  
Whose age has charms in it, whose title more,  
To pluck the common bosom on his side, 50  
And turn our impress'd lances in our eyes  
Which do command them. With him I sent the queen:  
My reason all the same; and they are ready  
To-morrow or at further space to appear  
Where you shall hold your session. At this time  
We sweat and bleed: the friend hath lost his friend;  
And the best quarrels, in the heat, are cursed  
By those that feel their sharpness.  
The question of Cordelia and her father  
Requires a fitter place.

ALB. Sir, by your patience,  
I hold you but a subject of this war,  
Not as a brother.

REG. That's as we list to grace him.

48 *retention*] confinement.

50 *the common bosom*] the heart of the common people.

51 *our impress'd lances*] weapons of the men we have impressed into our service.

55-60 *At this time . . . fitter place*] This passage is omitted from the Folios.

57-58 *And the best quarrels . . . sharpness*] And those engaged in wars even when waged in the justest of causes curse the quarrel in the excitement of the moment, when they suffer the bitter consequences, (either from loss of friends or by reason of their own wounds).

Methinks our pleasure might have been demanded,  
 Ere you had spoke so far. He led our powers,  
 Bore the commission of my place and person;  
 The which immediacy may well stand up  
 And call itself your brother.

GON. Not so hot:  
 In his own grace he doth exalt himself  
 More than in your addition.

REG. In my rights,  
 By me invested, he compeers the best.

GON. That were the most, if he should husband you.

REG. Jesters do oft prove prophets.

GON. Holla, holla!  
 That eye that told you so look'd but a-squint.

REG. Lady, I am not well; else I should answer  
 From a full-flowing stomach. General,  
 Take thou my soldiers, prisoners, patrimony;  
 Dispose of them, of me; the walls are thine:  
 Witness the world, that I create thee here  
 My lord and master.

66 *The which immediacy*] Such intimate association with my "place and person." Cf. *Hamlet*, I, ii, 109: "the most *immediate* to our throne"

69 *in your addition*] by virtue of the title with which you invest him.

73 *That eye . . . a-squint*] Cf. Ray's *Englsh Proverbs*: "Love being jealous makes a good eye look *a-squint*."

75 *stomach*] anger

77 *Dispose . . . thine*] This line is omitted from the Quartos, and appears only in the Folios. "The walls are thine" means that Regan surrenders her person as though it were a vanquished citadel Cf. *Cymb*, II, i, 60-61: "The heavens hold firm *The walls of thy dear honour*."



GON. Mean you to enjoy him?

ALB. The let-alone lies not in your good will. 80

EDM. Nor in thine, lord.

ALB. Half-blooded fellow, yes.

REG. [*To Edmund*] Let the drum strike, and prove  
my title thine.

ALB. Stay yet; hear reason. Edmund, I arrest thee  
On capital treason; and in thine attainst  
This gilded serpent [*pointing to Gon.*]. For your claim,  
fair sister,

I bar it in the interest of my wife;  
'Tis she is sub-contracted to this lord,  
And I, her husband, contradict your bans.  
If you will marry, make your loves to me;  
My lady is bespoken.

GON. An interlude! 90

ALB. Thou art arm'd, Gloucester: let the trumpet  
sound:

If none appear to prove upon thy person  
Thy heinous, manifest, and many treasons,  
There is my pledge [*throwing down a glove*]: I'll prove it  
on thy heart,

Ere I taste bread, thou art in nothing less  
Than I have here proclaim'd thee.

REG. Sick, O, sick!

80 *let-alone*] prohibition.

84 *in thine attainst*] in connexion with thy impeachment. Thus the

Quartos. The Folios read less satisfactorily *in thy arrest*.

90 *An interlude!*] A farce is on foot! This sarcastic interruption is omitted  
from the Quartos.

94 *prove it*] Thus the Quartos. The Folios read *make it*.

GON. [*Aside*] If not, I'll ne'er trust medicine.

EDM. [*Throwing down a glove*] There's my exchange:  
what in the world he is

That names me traitor, villain-like he lies:

Call by thy trumpet: he that dares approach, 100

On him, on you, — who not? — I will maintain

My truth and honour firmly.

ALB. A herald, ho!

EDM. A herald, ho, a herald!

ALB. Trust to thy single virtue; for thy soldiers,  
All levied in my name, have in my name  
Took their discharge.

REG. My sickness grows upon me.

ALB. She is not well; convey her to my tent.

[*Exit Regan, led.*]

*Enter a Herald*

Come hither, herald, — Let the trumpet sound, —  
And read out this.

CAPT. Sound, trumpet! [*A trumpet sounds.* 110

HER. [*Reads*] "If any man of quality or degree within the lists of the army will maintain upon Edmund, supposed Earl of Gloucester, that he is a manifold traitor, let him appear by the third sound of the trumpet: he is bold in his defence."

EDM. Sound! [*First trumpet.*]

\*97 *I'll ne'er trust medicine*] Goneril has poisoned her. Cf. line 228, *infra*.

104 *thy single virtue*] thy personal valour.

115 *Sound!*] Thus the Second and Third Quartos. The First Quarto reads *Sound?* The Folios omit Edmund's exclamation.

# KING LEAR

## ACT V

HER. Again!

[*Second trumpet.*

HER. Again!

[*Third trumpet.*

[*Trumpet answers within.*

*Enter EDGAR, at the third sound, armed, with a trumpet before him .*

ALB. Ask him his purposes, why he appears  
Upon this call o' the trumpet.

HER. What are you?  
Your name, your quality? and why you answer 120  
This present summons?

EDG. Know, my name is lost;  
By treason's tooth bare-gnawn and canker-bit:  
Yet am I noble as the adversary  
I come to cope.

ALB. Which is that adversary?

EDG. What's he that speaks for Edmund, Earl of  
Gloucester?

EDM. Himself: what say'st thou to him?

EDG. Draw thy sword,  
That if my speech offend a noble heart,  
Thy arm may do thee justice: here is mine.  
Behold, it is the privilege of mine honours,  
My oath, and my profession: I protest, 130  
Maugre thy strength, youth, place and eminence,  
Despite thy victor sword and fire-new fortune,

122 *canker-bit*] bitten by the caterpillar, by vermin.

124 *cope*] encounter.

129 *mine honours*] Thus the Folios. The Quartos read *my tongue*. "Mine honours" probably means "my honourable birth and standing."

Thy valour and thy heart, thou art a traitor,  
 False to thy gods, thy brother and thy father,  
 Conspirant 'gainst this high illustrious prince,  
 And from the extremest upward of thy head  
 'To the descent and dust below thy foot,  
 A most toad-spotted traitor. Say thou "No,"  
 This sword, this arm and my best spirits are bent  
 To prove upon thy heart, whereto I speak, 140  
 Thou liest.

EDM. In wisdom I should ask thy name,  
 But since thy outside looks so fair and warlike  
 And that thy tongue some say of breeding breathes,  
 What safe and nicely I might well delay  
 By rule of knighthood, I disdain and spurn:  
 Back do I toss these treasons to thy head;  
 With the hell-hated lie o'erwhelm thy heart;  
 Which for they yet glance by and scarcely bruise.

133 *thy heart*] thy courage.

138 *toad-spotted*] spotted with marks of infamy as numerous as the spots  
 on a toad.

143 *some say*] some assay, taste or smack

144 *What safe . . . delay*] This line is omitted from the Quartos

144-145 *What safe . . . knighthood*] That refusal (of your challenge)  
 which I might well and quite accurately make in accordance with  
 the laws of chivalry "Safe" is often used adverbially; "nicely"  
 is often used for "punctiliously"; "delay" often stands for "re-  
 fuse." Cf lines 152-153, *infra*.

146 *Back do I . . . head*] Thus the Folios; the Second and Third  
 Quartos omit the line. The First Quarto reads *Heere do I tosse those*  
*treasons to thy head*.

147 *hell-hated*] hated as hell.

# KING LEAR

ACT V

This sword of mine shall give them instant way,  
Where they shall rest for ever. Trumpets, speak! 150

*[Alarums. They fight. Edmund falls.]*

ALB. Save him, save him!

GON. This is practice, Gloucester;  
By the law of arms thou wast not bound to answer  
An unknown opposite; thou art not vanquish'd,  
But cozen'd and beguiled.

ALB. Shut your mouth, dame,  
Or with this paper shall I stop it. Hold, sir;  
Thou worse than any name, read thine own evil.  
No tearing, lady; I perceive you know it.

GON. Say, if I do, the laws are mine, not thine:  
Who can arraign me for 't?

ALB. Most monstrous!  
Know'st thou this paper? 160

GON. Ask me not what I know. *[Exit.]*

150 *Where they shall rest for ever]* Edmund threatens to drive the treasonable accusations into Edgar's heart with the blow of death.

151 *Save him, save him!]* The involuntary exclamation either illustrates Albany's humanity or expresses Albany's wish to preserve Edmund's life until at least he has confessed the guilt of which the intercepted letter convicts him.

*practice]* deceitful intrigue.

155 *Hold, sir]* Look, sir. "Hold" is used in much the same sense as "tenez," to arrest attention. The words are omitted from the Quartos.

159 *Most monstrous!]* Thus the Quartos. The Folios insert after these words the exclamation *O*, an impressive groan from Albany at Goneril's insolent confession of her iniquity.

160 GON. *Ask me not what I know. [Exit.]* Thus the Quartos. The Folios assign this line to Edmund, marking Goneril's exit after her previous speech (line 159). Seeing that Albany has already elicited from

ALB. Go after her: she's desperate; govern her.

EDM. What you have charged me with, that have  
I done;

And more, much more; the time will bring it out:  
'T is past, and so am I. But what art thou  
That hast this fortune on me? If thou'rt noble,  
I do forgive thee.

EDG. Let's exchange charity.  
I am no less in blood than thou art, Edmund;  
If more, the more thou hast wrong'd me.  
My name is Edgar, and thy father's son.  
The gods are just, and of our pleasant vices 170  
Make instruments to plague us:  
The dark and vicious place where thee he got  
Cost him his eyes.

EDM. Thou hast spoken right, 't is true;  
The wheel is come full circle; I am here.

ALB. Methought thy very gait did prophesy  
A royal nobleness: I must embrace thee:  
Let sorrow split my heart, if ever I  
Did hate thee or thy father!

EDG. Worthy prince, I know't.

ALB. Where have you hid yourself?  
How have you known the miseries of your father? 180

EDG. By nursing them, my lord. List a brief tale;  
And when 't is told, O, that my heart would burst!

---

Goneril the admission that she knew this paper, it might be thought unnecessary for him to renew his inquiry. But his next speech, "Go after her," etc., suggests that his wife is still addressing him here  
174 *The wheel is come full circle*] Cf. *Tw. Night*, V, i, 363: "The whirligig of time brings in his revenges."

The bloody proclamation to escape  
 That follow'd me so near, — O, our lives' sweetness!  
 That we the pain of death would hourly die  
 Rather than die at once! — taught me to shift  
 Into a madman's rags, to assume a semblance  
 That very dogs disdain'd: and in this habit  
 Met I my father with his bleeding rings,  
 Their precious stones new lost; became his guide, 190  
 Led him, begg'd for him, saved him from despair;  
 Never — O fault! — reveal'd myself unto him,  
 Until some half-hour past, when I was arm'd;  
 Not sure, though hoping, of this good success,  
 I ask'd his blessing, and from first to last  
 Told him my pilgrimage: but his flaw'd heart, —  
 Alack, too weak the conflict to support! —  
 'Twixt two extremes of passion, joy and grief,  
 Burst smilingly.

EDM. This speech of yours hath moved me,  
 And shall perchance do good: but speak you on; 200  
 You look as you had something more to say.

ALB. If there be more, more woful, hold it in;  
 For I am almost ready to dissolve,  
 Hearing of this.

EDG. This would have seem'd a period

185–186 *we the pain . . . die at once*] we would suffer every hour the pain  
 of death rather than die once for all. Thus the Folios. The Quartos  
 read *with the pain* for *we the pain*.

189 *rings*] sockets of the eyes.

203 *dissolve*] shed tears, melt in tears.

204–221 *This would . . . for a slave*] These lines are omitted from the  
 Folios. They appear only in the Quartos.

To such as love not sorrow; but another,  
To amplify too much, would make much more,  
And top extremity.

Whilst I was big in clamour, came there in a man,  
Who, having seen me in my worst estate,  
Shunn'd my abhorr'd society; but then, finding 210  
Who 't was that so endured, with his strong arms  
He fasten'd on my neck, and bellow'd out  
As he'ld burst heaven; threw him on my father;  
Told the most piteous tale of Lear and him  
That ever ear received: which in recounting  
His grief grew puissant, and the strings of life  
Began to crack: twice then the trumpets sounded,  
And there I left him tranced.

ALB.

But who was this?

EDG. Kent, sir, the banish'd Kent; who in disguise  
Follow'd his enemy king, and did him service 220  
Improper for a slave.

*Enter a Gentleman, with a bloody knife*

GENT. Help, help, O, help!

EDG.

What kind of help?

ALB.

Speak, man.

EDG. What means this bloody knife?

GENT.

'T is hot, it smokes;

It came even from the heart of — O, she's dead!

ALB. Who dead? speak, man.

---

205-207 *but another . . . extremity*] Any further period or conclusion to my story, by adding sorrow to what is already too much, would substantially increase the pathos and exceed the utmost limits of grief. "To amplify too much" is the gerundial infinitive.



# KING LEAR

ACT V

GENT. Your lady, sir, your lady: and her sister  
By her is poisoned; she hath confess'd it.

EDM. I was contracted to them both: all three  
Now marry in an instant.

EDG. Here comes Kent.

ALB. Produce the bodies, be they alive or dead. 230

[Exit Gentleman.]

This judgement of the heavens, that makes us tremble,  
Touches us not with pity.

Enter KENT

O, is this he?

The time will not allow the compliment  
Which very manners urges.

KENT. I am come  
To bid my king and master aye good night:  
Is he not here?

ALB. Great thing of us forgot!  
Speak, Edmund, where's the king? and where's  
Cordelia?

See'st thou this object, Kent?

[The bodies of Goneril and Regan are brought in.]

KENT. Alack, why thus?

EDM. Yet Edmund was beloved:  
The one the other poison'd for my sake, 240  
And after slew herself.

226-227 *her sister . . . poisoned*] Cf. line 97, *supra*.

231 *judgement*] Thus the Folios. The Quartos read *Iustice*.

233-234 *the compliment . . . urges*] the interchange of courtesies which mere good breeding requires "Manners" is also used thus with the verb in the singular in *Rom. and Jul*, V, iii, 213.

ALB. Even so. Cover their faces.

EDM. I pant for life: some good I mean to do,  
 Despite of mine own nature. Quickly send,  
 Be brief in it, to the castle; for my writ  
 Is on the life of Lear and on Cordelia:  
 Nay, send in time.

ALB. Run, run, O, run!

EDG. To who, my lord? Who hath the office? send  
 Thy token of reprieve.

EDM. Well thought on: take my sword, 250  
 Give it the captain.

ALB. Haste thee, for thy life. [*Exit Edgar.*]

EDM. He hath commission from thy wife and me  
 To hang Cordelia in the prison, and  
 To lay the blame upon her own despair,  
 That she fordid herself.

ALB. The gods defend her! Bear him hence awhile.  
[*Edmund is borne off.*]

*Re-enter LEAR, with CORDELIA dead in his arms; EDGAR, Captain,  
 and others following*

LEAR. Howl, howl, howl, howl! O, you are men of  
 stones:

Had I your tongues and eyes, I'd use them so  
 That heaven's vault should crack. She's gone for ever:  
 I know when one is dead and when one lives; 260  
 She's dead as earth. Lend me a looking-glass;  
 If that her breath will mist or stain the stone,  
 Why, then she lives.

255 *fordid herself*] destroyed herself. Cf. line 291, *infra*.

262 *the stone*] the mirror of crystal

# KING LEAR

## ACT V

KENT. Is this the promised end?

EDG. Or image of that horror?

ALB. Fall and cease.

LEAR. This feather stirs; she lives. If it be so,  
It is a chance which does redeem all sorrows  
That ever I have felt.

KENT. [*Kneeling*] O my good master!

LEAR. Prithee, away.

EDG. 'T is noble Kent, your friend.

LEAR. A plague upon you, murderers, traitors all!  
I might have saved her; now she's gone for ever! 270  
Cordelia, Cordelia! stay a little. Ha!

What is't thou say'st? Her voice was ever soft,  
Gentle and low, an excellent thing in woman.  
I kill'd the slave that was a-hanging thee.

CAPT. 'T is true, my lords, he did.

LEAR. Did I not, fellow?  
I have seen the day, with my good biting falchion

263-264 *Is this . . . image of that horror*] Kent asks if this is the end allotted to all things, according to Scriptural prophecy. Edgar asks whether it is not rather a premonitory phantasm of the final cataclysm. Cf. *Macb*, II, iii, 76, where the murder of Duncan is described: "The great doom's image."

264 *Fall and cease*] Probably "Let all things fall and come to an end." Such an exclamation is naturally suggested by the two preceding interrogations. It is just possible (as has been suggested) that "fall" and "cease" are used here as substantives and that the phrase means "(It is) ruin and end (of things)." The speaker, Albany, designates the situation "this great decay" at line 297, *infra*.

265 *This feather stirs*] Cf. *2 Hen IV*, IV, v, 31-32: "By his gates of breath There lies a downy feather which stirs not."

276 *falchion*] scimitar.

I would have made them skip: I am old now,  
 And these same crosses spoil me. Who are you?  
 Mine eyes are not o' the best: I'll tell you straight.

KENT. If fortune brag of two she loved and hated, 280  
 One of them we behold.

LEAR. This is a dull sight. Are you not Kent?

KENT. The same,  
 Your servant Kent. Where is your servant Caius?

LEAR. He's a good fellow, I can tell you that;  
 He'll strike, and quickly too: he's dead and rotten.

KENT. No, my good lord; I am the very man —

LEAR. I'll see that straight.

KENT. That from your first of difference and decay  
 Have follow'd your sad steps.

LEAR. You are welcome hither.

KENT. Nor no man else: all's cheerless, dark and  
 deadly. 290

278 *crosses*] misadventures.

281 *One of them we behold*] Thus all the early editions. But there is some justification for the conjectural change of *you* or *ye behold* for *we behold*. Kent is explaining to Lear his identity. After suggesting that there are two men of whom fortune may well boast that she has visited them with the full force of both her love and hate, he calls attention to himself as being one of the two. In the next line Lear glimmeringly recognises Kent from this description.

282 *This is a dull sight*] This is a melancholy spectacle which your words suggest. Thus the Folios. The Quartos omit the words. The suggested change *This is a dull light* in reference to the darkening of Lear's dying eyes is ingenious, but supererogatory.

288 *from your first of difference*] from the first indication of your change of fortune.

290 *Nor no man else*] There is no just cause of welcome for me or anyone else.

**ACT V**

[ 184 ]

Why should a dog, a horse, a rat, have life,  
 And thou no breath at all? Thou'lt come no more,  
 Never, never, never, never, never!

Pray you, undo this button: thank you, sir.

Do you see this? Look on her, look, her lips, 310

Look there, look there! [Dies.

EDG. He faints. My lord, my lord!

KENT. Break, heart; I prithee, break!

EDG. Look up, my lord.

KENT. Vex not his ghost: O, let him pass! he hates  
 him

That would upon the rack of this tough world  
 Stretch him out longer.

EDG. He is gone indeed.

KENT. The wonder is he hath endured so long:  
 He but usurp'd his life.

ALB. Bear them from hence. Our present business  
 Is general woe. [To Kent and Edgar] Friends of my soul,  
 you twain

'Rule in this realm and the gored state sustain. 320

KENT. I have a journey, sir, shortly to go;  
 My master calls me, I must not say no.

309 *Pray you, undo this button*] A singularly vivid touch, suggesting the  
 sense of suffocation, which ends a few moments later in Lear's death  
 310-311 *Do you see this? . . . look there!*] Thus the Folios The Quartos  
 read O, o, o, o, o.

321 *I have a journey . . . go*] an often repeated figurative description of  
 death. Cf Marlowe's *Edward II*, V, vi, 65-66, where Mortimer says  
 as he is led to execution that he "as a traveller Goes to discover  
 countries yet unknown" The most familiar instance is Hamlet's  
 mention of death (III, i, 79-80) as "the undiscovered country from  
 whose bourn No traveller returns"

# KING LEAR

ACT V

ALB. The weight of this sad time we must obey,  
 Speak what we feel, not what we ought to say.  
 The oldest hath borne most: we that are young  
 Shall never see so much, nor live so long.

*[Exeunt, with a dead march.]*

323-326 ALB. *The weight . . . so long*] The Quartos justly give this  
 speech to Albany. The Folios awkwardly transfer it to Edgar.











